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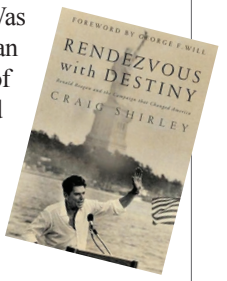
Letters

Incumbent Slayers



In his review of Craig Shirley's *Rendezvous with Destiny* ("Bliss Was It in That Dawn," January 25), Jay Cost writes that Ronald Reagan "was the only candidate in the 20th century to defeat an incumbent of the opposing party who had served just one term in office." I would be the last person to downplay the significance of Reagan's 1980 victory, but Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Bill Clinton also defeated first-term incumbents in 1912, 1932, and 1992, respectively. In addition, Jimmy Carter defeated incumbent Gerald Ford after less than one term in office.

Nevertheless, Carter was the only incumbent in the last century to regain the White House for his party only to lose it in just four years (a feat that usually requires eight or more years of incumbent-party fatigue, stalemated wars, or a depression). It is our country's great fortune that Reagan presented an inspiring alternative and was there to take over the job.

John O'Donnell
Vienna, Va.

JAY COST REPLIES: That results from an unfortunate choice of words on my part. My original was ambiguous, and what in the editing process became "who had served" should in fact have been "that had served"—referring to "opposing party," not "incumbent." I did not notice this, however, until after the review had been printed.

Political scientists tend to think that first-term parties have an advantage going into reelection campaigns, and I was attempting to point out how extraordinary it was that Reagan could enjoy such a decisive victory. Mr. O'Donnell is quite right to say that, in the 20th century, only once did a party gain the White House in one election and lose it in the next: the Democrats, in 1976 and 1980, with Jimmy Carter.

Literary Sleuthing

Time spent in the company of Theodore Dalrymple's prose is always a distinct pleasure, and it was delightful to listen to his language as he discoursed on the literary genius of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and of Conan Doyle's archetypal hero, Sherlock Holmes ("The Eternal Detective," December 31). The doctor examined with an eye (and ear) equal to the task, and turned a look at a favorite passage into an exemplary literary lecture, in which one depth after another is discovered. The passage he quotes has Holmes saying, "You are an enthusiast in your line of thought, I perceive, sir, as I am in mine." How very conversational, how polite, how like Holmes; and how clunky and dull the sentence could have been if written otherwise. Dalrymple is right: Holmes is withal a perfect English gentleman. To finish by noting that "no film, however . . . bad," can diminish Conan Doyle's creation, in the week a film of that creation's name appeared, without so much as mentioning the film by name, is a model of another English gift to civilization—the (cutting) understatement, here executed, again, with the skill of a medical man.

Greg Butler
Pawtucket, R.I.

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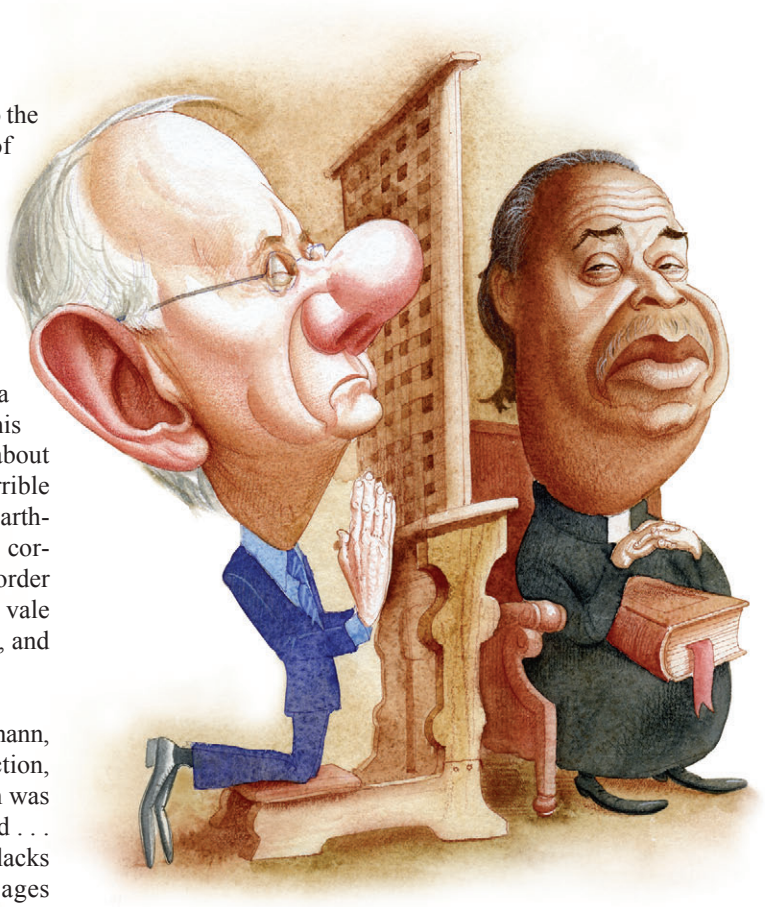
The Week

■ Just wait to see what we have planned for Vermont.

■ The earthquake spared nothing, from ordinary homes to the palace and the cathedral, and cost tens of thousands of lives. This was the Lisbon earthquake of 1755; Voltaire used the sudden and overwhelming destruction in *Candide* to undermine the theodicy of Leibniz. Two hundred and fifty-five years later we are still using disasters to score theological and political points. After the Haitian earthquake Pat Robertson mused on CBN that the country's troubles stemmed from a pact with the devil made by rebellious slaves in 1791. David Brooks gave a secularist interpretation for *New York Times* readers: "This is not a natural disaster story. This is a poverty story . . . about poorly constructed buildings, bad infrastructure and terrible public services." Yes, Haiti's woes, before and after the earthquake, are exacerbated by cultural, social, and political corruption. But let no one make too much of that. No human order is shock-proof, no human life is completely secure in this vale of tears. We do not know the day nor the hour. May God, and the U.S. Navy, help the sufferers.

■ Harry Reid, according to Mark Halperin and John Heilemann, authors of a new book (*Game Change*) on the 2008 election, was an early supporter of Barack Obama. And one reason was that he spotted a racial winner: Obama was "light-skinned . . . with no Negro dialect, unless he wanted to have one." Blacks have been saying such things about one another for ages (hence the mordant rhyme, *If you're brown, come on down; if you're black, stay back*). For a white man to make such judgments casually is, to say the least, tin-eared. Reid promptly apologized, and that should be the end of it—with the hope that Reid will show a little mercy to the next public figure who puts his foot in it. He won't, though, because accusations of racism are political tools, to be wielded by Democrats against Republicans (note that Reid apologized not only to Barack Obama, whom he offended, but to racial bully Al Sharpton). *If you're on the right, good night.*

■ Ted Olson and David Boies, a bipartisan team of top-flight lawyers, are challenging California's Proposition 8 in federal court. The argument is that the ballot initiative, by which California voters defined marriage as the union of a man and a woman in the state constitution, violates the rights of same-sex couples under the U.S. Constitution. If Olson and Boies are correct, then the marriage laws of most states are also likely unconstitutional. The high stakes make it all the more dismaying that Judge Vaughn Walker has been turning the case into a circus. First he prompted Olson and Boies to bring to court evidence about the motivations of the amendment's backers, including their moral views about homosexuality. Then he took irregular procedural steps to allow the trial to be videotaped and broadcast—creating the possibility that YouTube clips would expose amendment backers to more of the harassment in which supporters of same-sex marriage have shamefully engaged since the vote. The Supreme Court had to step in to block this scenario. If this lawsuit is not an attempt to exploit the law to achieve political goals that are properly sought elsewhere, the judge is certainly doing his best to give that impression.



ROMAN GENN

■ Maureen Dowd devoted a column to lauding Olson and Boies. Dowd did not waste a paragraph on anything resembling legal analysis, which was perhaps a blessing. Olson told her that maintaining marriage as the union of a man and a woman "has no point at all except some people don't want to recognize gays and lesbians as normal, as human beings." So now we know what Olson thinks of a majority of Americans and the vast majority of conservatives. Olson also cited the cases of notorious heterosexual adulterers such as Tiger Woods to prove . . . what, exactly? If same-sex marriages turn out to have high rates of infidelity, will Olson switch sides? And Olson told Dowd that "he finds himself getting weepy a lot" as he works on the case. Conservatives contemplating his performance may find themselves similarly moved.

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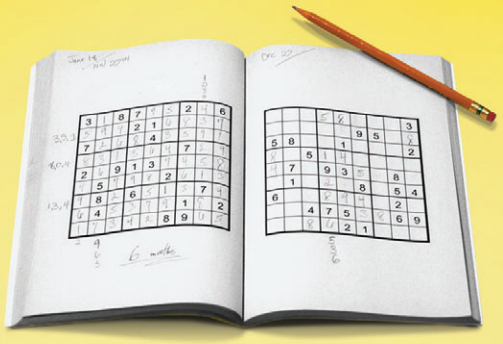

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■ Bret Schundler was once just about every conservative's favorite mayor, or at least one in whom they placed many hopes. "Look for him in 2008," wrote William F. Buckley Jr. This was during the 1990s, when Schundler was the Republican mayor of heavily Democratic Jersey City, N.J., just across the Hudson River from Manhattan. He gained national attention for his tireless promotion of school choice. This advocacy never enjoyed a payoff in actual policy, but it wasn't for a lack of effort: Trenton always blocked Schundler's initiatives. His two forays into state politics flopped. In 2001, he won the Republican gubernatorial nomination but lost the general election. In 2005, he didn't even get out of the GOP primary. Yet Schundler soon may find himself in New Jersey's capital: Gov. Chris Christie has nominated him to serve as state education commissioner. This is a bold selection that says much about Christie's commitment to education reform. Schundler still must be confirmed, but his presumptive return to the public arena is a welcome development.

■ Harold Ford Jr. for Senate? The former congressman (D., Tenn.) narrowly lost a tough race in 2006, and he is only 39 years old, so it makes sense to try again. Thing is, he wants to try in New York, where he now works for Bank of America. Ford is a stranger (he still has a Tennessee driver's license) with a number of right-of-center positions (he opposes partial-birth abortion and supports parental-consent laws), some of which he has expeditiously dumped (he now supports gay marriage). The only solid thing he has going for him is unease with the bland incumbent, Kirsten Gillibrand, appointed to Hillary Clinton's old seat—and with Gillibrand's dragonish patron, senior senator Charles Schumer, who bullied two local congressmen out of challenging his protégé. Voters are restless these days—and maybe even someone as transparent as Harold Ford Jr. can turn that bucking and stamping to his advantage.

■ Office of Management and Budget director Peter Orszag became a father again last November, six weeks before announcing his engagement. Putting the baby before the ring is increasingly common. But it's still unusual for the baby to be borne by one woman while the ring goes on the finger of another. The mother is venture capitalist Claire Milonas, who was Orszag's girlfriend. The fiancée is ABC News financial correspondent Bianna Golodryga, whom Orszag met at last spring's White House Correspondents Dinner. Did Orszag and Milonas split up before Orszag and Golodryga started dating? That is the point of decorum that the Jane Austens of 21st-century Washington are reduced to discussing. Everybody in the circus might ponder this: "Too many fathers . . . have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men. And the foundations of our families are weaker because of it" (Barack Obama, Father's Day 2008). But that was a speech aimed at poor black fathers, not rich and famous white ones.

■ In an effort to save the imperiled health-care bill, Democrats cut a tentative deal with organized labor that would exempt unionized employees from an excise tax on high-cost health-care plans. Of the many unsavory bargains and rotten deals that have characterized the rush to get this thing passed (the "Louisiana Purchase," the "Cornhusker Kickback," etc.), the "Labor Loophole" surely takes the prize. The deal, for which there is no conceivable public-policy justification, would mean that two people with the same plans and incomes would pay different taxes based on union membership. A few Democrats in the Senate tried to insert this provision at the committee level and were laughed out of the smoke-filled room, so nakedly obvious was the special-interest favoritism at work. That the Democratic party embraced this deal at the last minute is a sign of how desperate it became to pass a bill—any bill—that shoved the federal foot through the waiting-room door.

■ Nevada officials said the state may drop out of Medicaid if the health-care bill passes. Instead it would help its low-income legal residents participate in the federally subsidized exchanges that the bill would establish. The resulting insurance policies would doubtless be more attractive to beneficiaries than Medicaid is. The result: Nevada would spend less on their health insurance, the federal government more. Other states would inevitably make the same calculation. So we have more reason to think that the official projections of this bill's impact on the federal budget are off the mark. And that the perversities of this legislation have no end.

■ President Obama wants to slap a cumbrous new tax on American banks. "We want our money back," he says. The government is expected to lose money on the bailouts—but not the money used to backstop the banks, which are paying it back, with interest. The real losses are expected to come from insurer AIG and from such untouchable Democratic holies as Fannie Mae, the heavily unionized automakers, and the foreclosure-prevention program. Obama's tax hike would harrow the prudent and imprudent alike, extracting billions of dollars from banks that never took bailout money in the first place. A new tax on banks is a new tax on Americans' savings and checking accounts. How big? It would have cost JPMorgan's customers and shareholders $1.5 billion had it been in effect last year, another $1.5 billion for Bank of America, another $1 billion for Morgan Stanley, and would have punished many smaller banks to the tune of billions more. The Democrats are having trouble running against Republicans at the moment, so Obama seeks to run instead against Wall Street—and against the bailouts he voted for as a senator and expanded as president.

■ The Pentagon released its review of the Fort Hood massacre—the one in which Maj. Nidal Hasan, a jihadist in an American uniform, opened fire on defenseless people, killing 13 of them and wounding 43. It concludes that Hasan's supervisors made some mistakes, failing to intervene when his special characteristics became clear. And it says that the Army should consider disciplining those supervisors. As Bill Bennett has pointed out, the 86-page report does not mention the word "Islam" or "Muslim" once. It is soaked in the political correctness that is a longstanding hallmark of our military: indeed, that in all likelihood prevented Hasan's superiors from intervening. Who would

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have faced repercussions, the Islamist major or his "insensitive," possibly "Islamophobic" superiors? Even so mild and moderate a politician as Sen. Susan Collins (R., Maine) was disappointed by the report. Shortly after the massacre, the Army chief of staff, Gen. George Casey, made a chilling statement. He said, "As horrific as this tragedy was, if our diversity becomes a casualty, I think that's worse." A mentality of political correctness does no one any favors: not American Muslims, not Muslims serving honorably in the armed forces, not anybody.

■ Democrats caterwauled about President Bush's "signing statements." Traditionally issued by presidents to explain their views about bills being signed into law, they are a vestige of a time when all three branches of government felt obliged to consider the constitutionality of their actions—instead of feeling entitled to see what they could get away with and let the courts sort it out later. Moreover, a government that is too big enacts laws that contain thousands of provisions; it would be impractical to veto every bill that includes some dubious component. Presidents are not required to enforce unconstitutional laws, so better they tell us which provisions they believe to be invalid. Plus, signing statements are no more binding on courts than legislative history is: Only the actual words of a statute become law. But congressional Democrats want to own the prerogative of extra-legal spin, which litigants use to persuade judges about how laws should be construed. Thus Democrats speciously complained that Bush's signing statements were a usurpation of legislative

A Farewell to Reality

REMEMBER that whole thing about the "reality-based community"? A little bit? Not really? Okay, well, just to bring you up to speed, in 2004 Ron Suskind, author of some Bush-bashing books that seemed really important to Frank Rich at the time, quoted an unnamed Bush aide who said something that perfectly symbolized everything Bush-bashers liked to believe about themselves. The long and short of it was that this anonymous guy conveniently told Suskind that the empire builders of the Bush administration weren't members of the "reality-based community," like Suskind.

Wikipedia, a perfect source for this sort of thing, if for nothing else, says that "*Reality-based community* is a popular term among liberal political commentators in the United States. . . . The term has been defined as people who 'believe that solutions emerge from judicious study of discernible reality.' Some commentators have gone as far as to suggest that there is an overarching conflict in society between the reality-based community and the 'faith-based community' as a whole."

So why rehash all this stuff?

Because, if you haven't noticed, that same RBC is going nuts. By my rough calculation, E. J. Dionne Jr. has written 10,000 columns (okay, maybe it just feels that way) on how liberalism has no real problems of any kind. The only challenges it faces derive from a fictional "narrative" made up by nasty Republicans. That narrative says that Senate majority leader Harry Reid is a comic oaf, when he is in fact a master of the Senate. The same conservative ignorami call House speaker Nancy Pelosi a left-wing ideologue, when in fact she is "a highly practical local politician more concerned with delivering the goods than with passing ideological litmus tests."

And the fact that Massachusetts was poised to elect a Republican who had turned his race into a referendum on Obamacare? No problem; Bay State voters actually have a "love-hate" relationship with the Democratic party and vote for Republicans all the time. Jonathan Chait over at *The New Republic* agrees: "It's not actually *that* uncommon for a Senator to win an election in a state that tends to heavily favor the opposite party." That it hasn't happened in Massachusetts in over 30 years, and that it's Ted Kennedy's seat? Mere details!

Other leading liberal pundits don't deny that Obama is having problems; they just attribute the problems to things that have nothing in common with the universe we actually occupy. Take Paul Krugman. On January 18, Krugman penned a column in which he insisted that all of Obama's problems can be traced to the fact that he has been too centrist and bipartisan. If only the stimulus hadn't been so small, the economy would be humming right now. Obama the Triangulator stumbled because he is too deeply committed to moderation.

Obama's bigger sin, according to Krugman? He has steadfastly refused to blame his problems on his predecessor, George W. Bush. No, really, he said that, and without dissolving in giggles. Krugman seems to have missed Obama's reflexive blame-passing to Bush in nearly every major address and interview, foreign and domestic, for the last year.

But back to Dionne. He insists that what conservatives call "liberalism" isn't really liberalism. "Big government, big deficits, an overly ambitious health-care plan, a stimulus that spent too much and other supposedly left-leaning sins of the Obama regime" don't amount to liberalism, he explains, just to what addle-pated conservatives think liberalism is.

Now, where could conservatives have gotten that idea? I'll give you hint: It rhymes with shmeality.

—JONAH GOLDBERG

E. J. DIONNE JR.: WILLIAM B. PLOWMAN/NBC NEWSWIRE/AP

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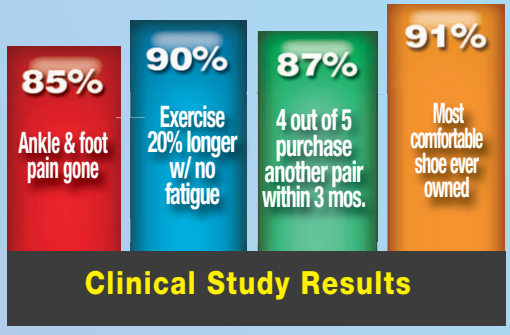
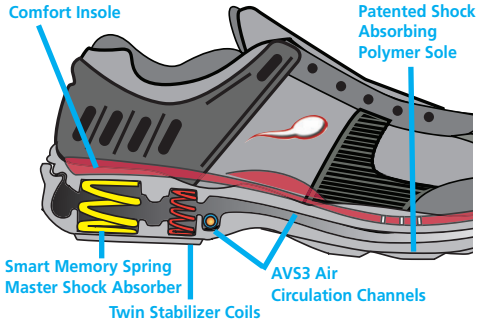


Clinical Study Results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authority. When Obama nevertheless continued the practice, Bush-deranged Dems complained, so Obama has stopped issuing signing statements. Oh, he's still picking out provisions he intends to disregard. He just doesn't tell us what they are. Nothing like transparency.

JOHN YOO: SCOTT J. FERRELL/CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY

■ Jon Stewart, the comedian masquerading as a political commentator (or is it the other way around?), delights in making conservative guests on his *Daily Show* squirm. It was delightful, then, to see the tables turned on him by John Yoo, the Bush Justice Department official who authored what the Left tendentiously calls the "torture memos." These offered an argument that it would *not* constitute torture for the administration to waterboard top al-Qaeda detainees and use other "enhanced" interrogation techniques against them. As Stewart tried to interrogate Yoo, it became clear the former did not grasp the distinction between advocating torture and arguing that something is not torture. It also became clear he did not understand the constitutional role of the executive in wartime. It also became clear he generally had no clue. He at one point had to save himself by going to a commercial, and he ended the interview sputtering for words. Yoo was devastating in part because he was polite; there was no trace of a scowl or a sneer in his demeanor, only a smile. Let future right-leaning *Daily Show* guests take note: You needn't outjoke Stewart, or get angry with him. It is enough to explain what you know—and he doesn't.

■ The standard argument for the superiority of the American to the more statist European economic model holds that the former does more to promote economic growth. NATIONAL REVIEW contributor Jim Manzi, writing in *National Affairs*, argues that the American model, to be sustained, must incorporate reforms to enable the least fortunate to improve their lot. Liberals, notably Paul Krugman, have reacted to the essay by claiming that Manzi never proves that the American model is in fact better at promoting growth—which is true, since proving that view was not Manzi's aim. In the ensuing debate, liberals pointed out that Europe's per capita growth has been roughly equal to America's. Conservatives made three points in response. The first was that one might have expected Europe to grow faster than America over the last few decades since America had a head start after World War II. The second is that total economic growth has been higher in the U.S. than in European social democracies because of population growth. That may suggest that the European model cannot accommodate large families and immigration, and that it is better suited to countries that are resigned to declining on the world stage: Geopolitical influence depends more on the total size of the economy than on individual living standards. The third is that Europe has had the advantage of not having to devote the resources to the military that the U.S. does, in part *because* the U.S. does. All in all, for the U.S. to go the social-democratic route seems like a bad idea—for the world as well as for us.

■ Reporters largely ignored it, but the Department of Health and Human Services released a study showing that Head Start's positive effects peter out by the end of first grade. The study included 44 tests, of which 42 found no statistically significant and lasting improvement. Some positive results are to be expected when you run that many tests, and a footnote points out that the two apparently lasting results disappear after correcting for that tendency. Andrew Coulson and Adam Schaeffer of the Cato Institute point out that school choice, on the other hand, appears to have lasting positive results. Naturally, the Democrats have expanded funding for Head Start while ending school choice in D.C.

■ The stimulus bill included $4.35 billion to encourage the states to reform their schools, and President Obama has just suggested another $1.35 billion. The program is called "Race to the Top." As Stephen Spruiell explains on page 24 of this issue, Rick Perry, the Republican governor of Texas, has turned down his state's share of the money. Perry says that Texas has already improved its schools and can continue to do so without jumping through federal hoops, and warns that the federal funding is a step toward national standards—standards that he thinks would inevitably be mediocre. He is probably right. But the Democrats should be commended for acknowledging, if only in a small way, that competition might deliver better schools.

■ Texas is in a battle over its public-school history curriculum, in which the founder of the Mary Kay cosmetics company currently receives more prominent notice than does Christopher Columbus—and which had, until recently, excluded Christmas from its list of prominent cultural observations. The role of Christianity in the American Founding is the subject of particularly hot debate. Identity politics is a predictable and lamentable aspect of the debate, with liberals on the curriculum board attempting to legislate specific mention of such vitals of American history as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the League of United Latin American Citizens, and Raza Unida. Conservatives on the board have made mirroring demands for mention of Phyllis Schlafly, the Heritage Foundation, and the National Rifle Association. Such are the abundant glories of government-run education. Texas's students would be better served if these decisions were made by local school boards rather than by Austin-based political animals of either party—as would the nation's: Texas and California are the country's two largest buyers of textbooks (and penniless California is not buying these days), so Texas's mandates affect what is taught from coast to coast.

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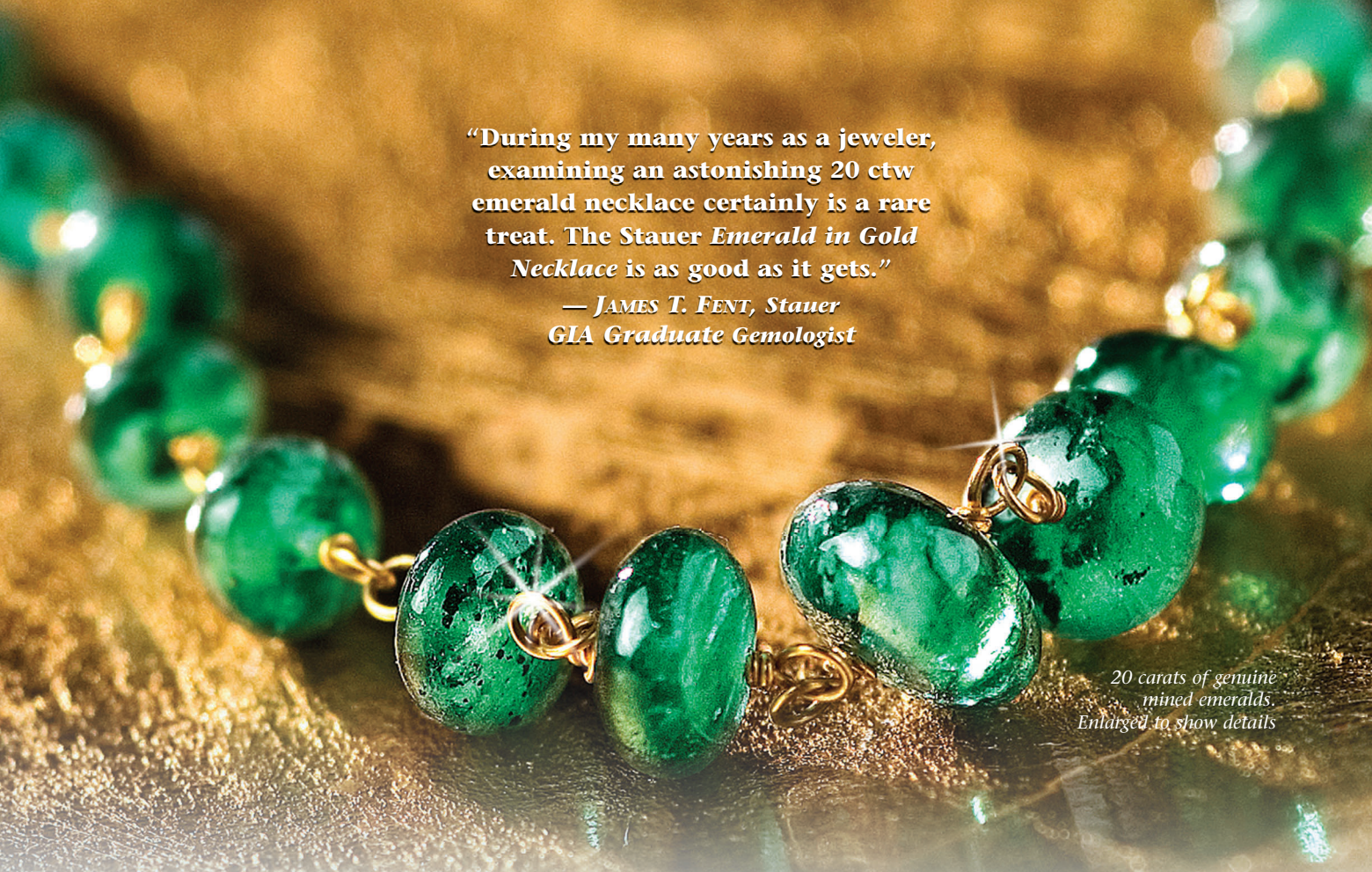
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■ The Himalayan glaciers will disappear by 2035! That factoid, which appeared in the IPCC's 2007 climate-change report, turns out to have zero evidence behind it. The claim, from a 1999 news story in the British magazine *New Scientist*, was based on a brief telephone interview with an Indian researcher who now says it was mere speculation, and in any case applied to only a portion of the glaciers. *New Scientist* presented it as a preliminary finding that had not been reviewed or published, but in the IPCC report, this non-result became the following: "Glaciers in the Himalaya are receding faster than in any other part of the world and, if the present rate continues, the likelihood of them disappearing by the year 2035 and perhaps sooner is very high if the Earth keeps warming at the current rate." What appears to be melting now is the IPCC's credibility.

■ Some of President Obama's appointments have been at least mildly encouraging (Robert Gates, Arne Duncan), while others have been disappointing in all-too-predictable ways (Eric Holder, Sonia Sotomayor, Kevin Jennings). But the now-withdrawn nomination of Erroll Southers to head the Transportation Safety Administration was a puzzler. For a job that requires great judgment and discretion, Obama chose a man who misused a secret government database for personal reasons (and was less than forthcoming in his testimony about it); who would have given workers on the front lines against terror the same union protections as Agriculture Department file clerks; and who, based on a 2008 interview, seemed to view pro-life and "Christian identity" groups as a bigger threat than al-Qaeda and its allies (who are, of course, provoked by America's foreign policy). We're sure Mr. Southers would have done fine work keeping fundamentalist Episcopalians from blowing up aircraft, but for the job of stopping Islamic terrorists he was singularly ill-suited. Let us give thanks that the job will not be his.

■ The president has done it again: called Guantanamo Bay a "recruiting tool," something that causes Muslims to join up with the jihad. He said, "Make no mistake: We will close Guantanamo Prison, which has damaged our national-security interests and become a tremendous recruiting tool for al-Qaeda. In fact, that was an explicit rationale for the formation of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula." Jihadism has no shortage of excuses—it never has. It had plenty of excuses before any jihadist was sent to Guantanamo Bay. And an American president should be careful not to give any credence to jihadist excuses. He should also be careful about mentioning the "explicit rationales" of jihadists. The American-Israeli alliance is an explicit rationale of terrorist groups; so is the American-Saudi alliance; so is an Iraq striving toward democracy. Terrorists do not dictate our policies, and they should be free of any illusion that they do.

■ If someone tries to rob you, do you care whether the policeman who stops him is black or white? The Department of Justice does. Using the standard of "disparate impact"—under which almost any test, no matter how carefully vetted, can be ruled illegally discriminatory if some group does not score high enough on it—DOJ has filed suit against New Jersey because of its exam for police sergeants. The mere threat of such litigation has made Chicago consider completely abolishing its testing of police applicants; meanwhile, a federal judge has accused New York City's fire department of "intentional discrimination" for using a test on which blacks did poorly. The "disparate impact" doctrine is bad for white applicants, who must meet unfairly high standards; bad for states and municipalities, which, between DOJ's zealots and the Supreme Court's recent *Ricci* decision, are damned if they do and damned if they don't; and bad for the public of all races, whose civil servants cannot be winnowed as thoroughly as they should be. But it's great for the diversity industry, which is why Barack Obama's Justice Department is sure to continue the crusade no matter what.

AP

■ IRS Commissioner Douglas Shulman recently confessed that our tax system is so complicated that even he has to pay somebody else to do his taxes: "I find the tax code complex, so I use a preparer," he said on C-SPAN. Maybe he could ask his boss, Tim Geithner, for some tips.

Before

After

■ When the FBI made an online "wanted" poster of Osama bin Laden, it needed an image showing what he would look like today. The artist created it, in part, using features from an image of Gaspar Llamazares, a Spanish politician who could pass for the middle-aged Osama in a dim light. When Llamazares found out, he was understandably furious, expecting to be strip-searched every time he tried to board a plane. The U.S. government has offered an apology, which Llamazares has angrily spurned, but we have a better idea. Llamazares led the leftist coalition in Spain's parliament for eight years; he is a member of the Communist party who earned a public-health degree in Havana. What better way for Obama to make amends than by appointing him federal health czar?

■ In a region traditionally known for producing loud, blustery autocrats who champion failed economic policies (Castro, Ortega, Chávez), Chile is a quietly remarkable success story. On January 11, it signed an accession agreement to become the first South American member of the OECD. Less than a week later, Chilean voters elected a conservative government for the first time since General Pinochet stepped down 20 years ago. The victory of presidential candidate Sebastián Piñera, a billionaire airline mogul, ends two decades of rule by the center-left Concertación coalition, whose multiple governments largely maintained the free-market economic reforms that were adopted under Pinochet. In recent years, Chilean officials moved away from pro-growth policies and

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toward greater social spending, but they also saved much of their copper windfall during the commodity boom, ensuring that they were in a strong fiscal position when the global financial crisis erupted. Piñera will inherit a well-run economy—one that has the potential to grow much faster. His election, like that of Ricardo Martinelli in Panama last May, affirms that not all Latin American countries are moving left.

■ In 2005, Google, the Internet giant, went into China. It made a grave compromise when it did so. Bowing to the demands of the Chinese authorities, Google censored its search engine. It created a special engine just for China. This means that Web users in China who Google "human rights," say, or "Tibet," will get sanitized results, or none at all. The company justified its decision to cooperate with Beijing by saying that it was better for Chinese people to have some Google rather than none. In any case, Google is in a much different posture now. Sometime in December, the Chinese government attacked Google's "corporate infrastructure," as the company says. The government's main purpose was to pry into the e-mail accounts of human-rights activists and their supporters. Google expressed public displeasure with China, something rarely expressed toward that government, by anyone. And the company is threatening to pull out of the country altogether. It is also saying that, after these five years, it is no longer willing to censor its search engine. This is a surprising and welcome development. At Google's offices in Beijing, ordinary Chinese came to present flowers, in appreciation.

■ The Obama administration may be putting the brakes on America's development of missile defenses, but China hasn't halted any of its plans to develop a missile shield. On January 11, Beijing announced a successful missile-intercept test above the Earth's atmosphere. Xinhua, the government news agency, said the test was "defensive in nature." If that's true, China may want to propose a reduction in the number of missiles it aims at Taiwan and elsewhere.

■ You will remember that, on December 30, a Jordanian doctor killed seven CIA employees in a suicide attack in Afghanistan. His wife—widow, we should probably say—is quite proud of him. She is a Turk named Defne Bayrak, and she has written a book: *Osama bin Laden, the Che Guevara of the East*. The comparison is not a bad one, actually.

■ Here's a happy story: Two thugs broke into the garden of a British television personality and new mother, but she scared them off by brandishing a kitchen knife and shouting from her window. Unfortunately, the Hertfordshire coppers who responded to Myleene Klass's call were not impressed by her self-described display of "mummy powers"—they advised her to let the police handle all intrusions in the future. No official reprimand was handed down, but the police department's message is clear: A Briton's home is his castle only in the most theoretical sense.

■ The pyramids of Egypt have excited wonder and speculation for millennia. Some other responses, too: Dr. Johnson called the Great Pyramid "a monument of the insufficiency of human enjoyments." These astonishing structures continue to deliver surprises—a hitherto-unknown one, much reduced and buried in sand, was discovered only in November 2008. How were they built? Herodotus was told that the Pharaoh Cheops "commanded all Egyptians to do forced labor for him," including the cutting and transporting of stones for his pyramids. In later centuries, perhaps influenced by the Book of Exodus (which, however, deals with events a millennium later), people came to think that foreign slaves built the pyramids. Egyptologists, working from traces left by the ancient work force, were skeptical, and their skepticism has now been vindicated. Tombs of workmen have been discovered that are better appointed, and closer to the pyramids themselves, than would have been the case for slaves. Indirect evidence suggests the workers may even have been from upper-class families. Perhaps the well-informed parents of ancient Egypt, like those of today's United States, were urging their kids to get a government job.

As you continue to give ground to extremists, you may find yourself with too little ground left to stand on.

■ One Saudi Arabian braved flash floods in Jeddah to rescue two family members and dozens of strangers from drowning. This act of heroism was made more remarkable by the fact that the driver, who threw a rope to stranded cars and then dragged them out, was a woman—which makes it a violation of Saudi Arabia's ban on woman drivers. Malak al-Mutairy's rescued father isn't complaining, though: "My daughter has a strong personality. Nothing, even floods, deters her when she is determined to do something." Isn't that exactly the spirit the law is trying to combat?

■ There is such a thing as preemptive surrender to the jihad. We have seen this in case after case—and the latest involves the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. This is one of the most important cultural institutions in America, indeed the world. The *New York Post* reports that the museum "quietly pulled images of the Prophet Mohammed from its Islamic collection and may not include them in a renovated exhibition area slated to open in 2011." Why? "The museum said the controversial images—objected to by conservative Muslims who say their religion forbids images of their holy founder—were 'under review.'" *The New Criterion*'s Roger Kimball had a pointed comment about "controversial images": "You know what, I'll bet there are some prudish types who object to the exhibition of naked women. What is the Met going to do about that?" We all understand that an institution should not take unnecessary risks. We also understand that, as you continue to give ground to extremists, you may find yourself with too little ground left to stand on.

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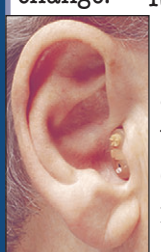

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■ After years of denials and evasions, Mark McGwire, the home-run king, admitted to steroid use. As he did so, he sobbed. He said, "The toughest thing is my wife, my parents, close friends have had no idea that I hid it from them all this time. . . . I knew this day was going to come. I didn't know when." He said it was especially hard to break the news to his son, now 22, who was 10 when McGwire hoisted him at home plate: That was when McGwire broke Roger Maris's record for home runs in a single season. Before he made his public admission, McGwire called Maris's widow, to tell her and apologize. Some people greeted McGwire's admission cynically: For one thing, everyone knew he was guilty; for another, he was to reenter baseball as the hitting coach for one of his old teams, the Cardinals—and he had to come clean before that. Still, a coming clean is a wonderful thing. A great slugger, Hank Aaron, responded this way: "He has my forgiveness." He added that, if steroids are the only thing keeping McGwire out of the Hall of Fame, "we should all forgive him." That seems right.

■ Miep Gies used to say she was just an ordinary housewife. Austrian by birth, and Catholic, she married a Dutchman named Jan Gies and lived in Amsterdam. In the war, Miep and Jan helped hide Otto Frank and his family in a secret room, daily risking their own lives to do so. For Miep, Otto Frank's young daughter Anne was a girl "full of the joy of just being alive," and she remembered seeing Anne writing her diary with a look of utter intensity in her face. When the Gestapo rounded up the Franks, Miep kept Anne's diary safe. She also respected Anne's privacy. If she'd read those pages, she would have found references to herself and Jan, and might well have destroyed the lot for fear that the Gestapo in another search would incriminate them. After the war Otto Frank returned, and he was with Miep when he heard that his wife and daughters were dead. Miep took out the diary, saying, "Here is your daughter Anne's legacy to you." More than that, it is a legacy to us all. *The Diary of Anne Frank* has been published in millions of copies in dozens of languages. Miep had her part in rescuing a human document that touches the heart like no other. This admirable lady lived to be 100. The world could do with a lot more ordinariness like hers. R.I.P.

THE SENATE

Brown In

Scott Brown didn't defeat just Martha Coakley in the Massachusetts Senate race. He also defeated a hardy band of political clichés. That Republicans can't win Senate races in deep-blue Massachusetts. That the state is devoted to "the Kennedy legacy." That the Republican party has become hostage to extremists who would rather lose than support a pro-choice candidate. That the GOP has become a southern regional party. That what Democrats call "health-care reform" is a fait accompli. That President Obama has magical powers of persuasion.

Democrats are blaming Coakley for running a bad campaign. Actually, it was a terrible one. But she had won statewide before, and the local party establishment expressed no alarm when she won the nomination. They either didn't see her flaws or thought that in Massachusetts it wouldn't matter. What made a weak candidate a losing candidate was the national environment.

MATTHEW HEALEY/UPI

Liberals—some of the same people who chalked up Obama's win to the public's new zeal for progressivism—blame the economy for the public mood. But is it really high unemployment that has moved the public against the health-care legislation, abortion, and gun control? Remember that just a few months ago the conventional wisdom was that a weak economy would build public support for Obamacare. The Massachusetts race was as close to a referendum on that legislation as can reasonably be imagined, and it lost.

So another Democratic excuse is making the rounds: Massachusetts is a special case, since it already has near-universal coverage and thus has more to lose than gain from the legislation. But a lot of states, and indeed the whole country, will lose more than gain, and know it. Some Democrats have talked about putting Obamacare into law by having Democratic appointee Paul Kirk vote for it before Brown can be seated. We suspect that move would be too disgraceful to work. But to push the Senate bill through the House and make it law that way would also be to ignore the clear will of even blue-state voters. Democrats will deserve the thrashing they will get if they follow this course.

We have no doubt that National Review will have friendly disagreements with Senator Brown on many issues. But Brown ran on tax cuts, tough interrogations of terrorists, and opposition to a federal takeover of health care and a bank tax. If that is a winning platform in Massachusetts, it will surely be one elsewhere.

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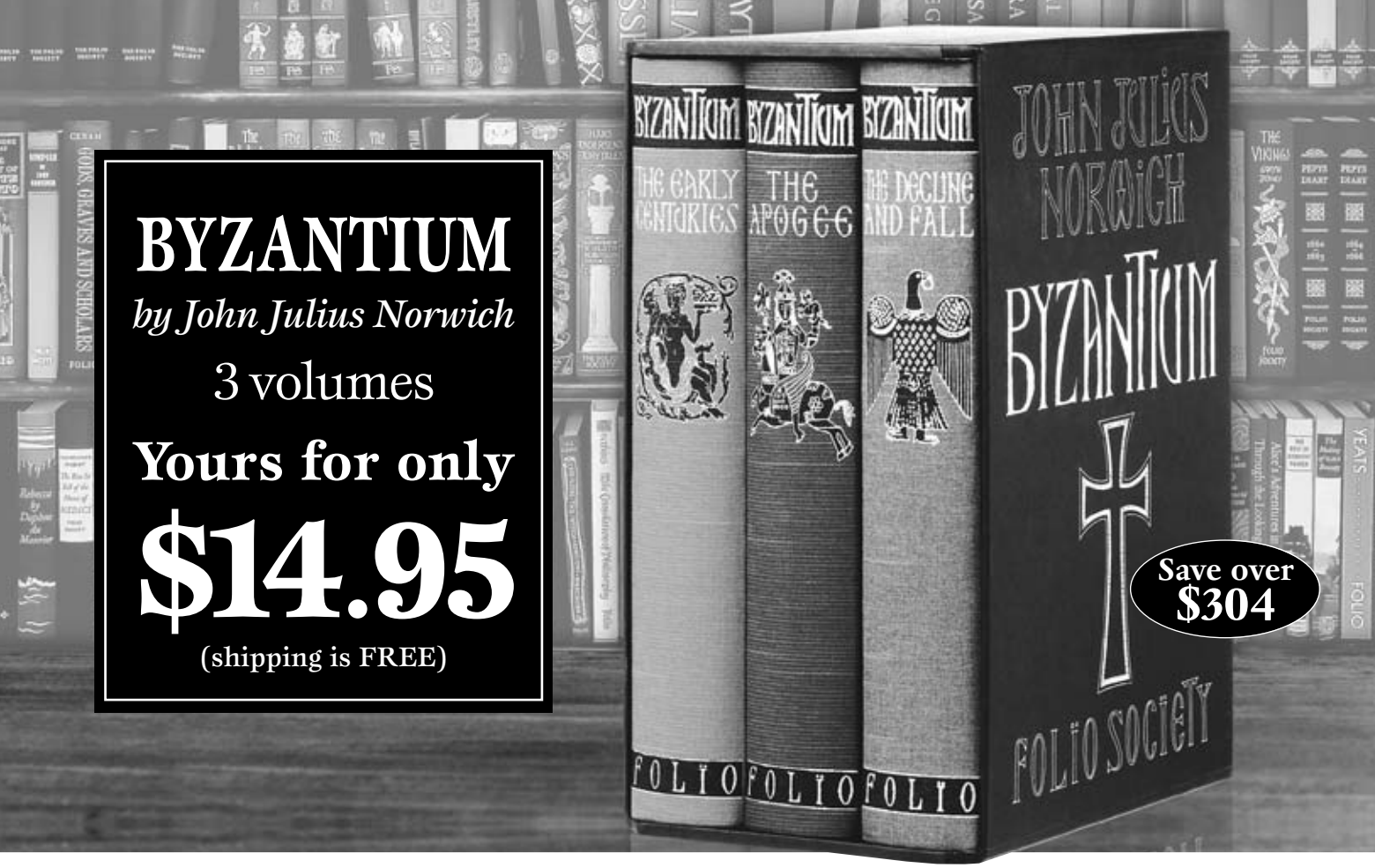

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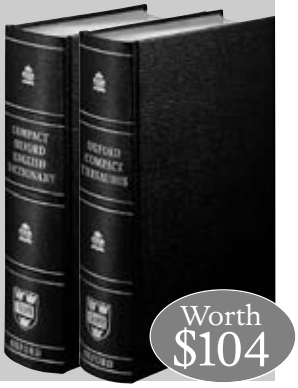

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Contractual Obligations

A plan to win—and to govern

BY RAMESH PONNURU

THE smart money is on the Republicans' making big gains in the House, the Senate, and governorships this fall, but not taking control of either chamber of Congress. That's where the smart money was at the start of 1994, too, and Republicans took control of both a few months later. In the spring of 2006 few people thought the Democrats would take the Senate as well as the House that year. They did.

Republicans are doing sufficiently well that their objective this fall has to be at least to retake the House. There is no point in their setting their sights any lower, and announcing that objective will motivate conservative voters and activists in a way that a lesser goal, such as gaining 25 seats, will not. A simple majority in the Senate is less valuable: There the key numbers are 41, the number below which even a unified minority lacks the power to block legislation on its own, and 60, the number below which even a unified majority can be blocked. In the Senate the Republicans' goal should be to get enough above 40 that they can block legislation even if the Democrats manage to persuade a small number of Republicans to vote for it.

A lot of Republicans believe that to maximize the party's potential gains they should repeat one thing they did in 1994. That September, almost all Republican candidates for the House gathered on the steps of the Capitol to pledge that if they took control of that body they would quickly force floor votes on ten items, which they collectively called the "Contract with America." Party chairman Haley Barbour paid to put an ad about the contract in *TV Guide*.

Political professionals have not reached a consensus about the importance of the Contract to the Republican wins in 1994. The elections that November were first and foremost a referendum on the first two years of Bill Clinton's presidency. Polls showed that most voters were not aware of the Contract. Republicans largely omitted social issues from the Contract in the interest of party unity, but they appeared to play a strong role in the elections. (Some observers said Republicans had won on "God, gays, and guns.")

But the Contract served several useful functions even if it was not uppermost in the minds of voters. First, it gave Republican candidates policy issues they could all talk about. Second, it helped imbue the party with an image of being forward-looking problem-solvers rather than merely anti-Clintonites. Third, it lured the Democrats into a mistake. They attacked the Contract as a reprise of Ronald Reagan's failed policies, not realizing that the public, in electing Bill Clinton two years earlier, had not thought of itself as repudiating Reagan or his policies.

The Contract did not pledge that Republicans would actually enact the legislation they ran on or even pass all of it through the House. The premise of the Contract was that the entrenched Democratic majority of the House, which had run it for 40 years, had refused even to hold votes on popular conservative ideas. (While Republican claims that each of the items in the Contract had the support of more than 60 percent of the public were misleading, those items clearly had widespread appeal.)

The decades of Democratic control meant that "there was a lot of low-hanging fruit," says Ed Gillespie, a Republican strategist who was working for his party's House leadership at the time. "It's a more challenging environment now," he adds. Republicans had control of the House, Senate, and presidency only four years ago. The party does not have four decades' worth of untried legislative ideas on the shelf.

Another difference from 16 years ago is that back then no organizations were looking backward at the success of a previous Contract. This time many activist groups and individual candidates will have their own ten-point plans. "There are going to be multiple contracts," says an aide to House Republican whip Eric Cantor. Social conservatives, tea partiers, and congressmen with their own national followings will all want to see the party's contract reflect at least some of their ideas, which will make devising it tricky. That will be the job of Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California. He ran the platform committee in 2008, and is widely credited with preventing the differences between conservative activists and presidential nominee John McCain from causing an explosion.

For all the changes since 1994, there are enough similarities between Republicans' conditions now and then to justify trying to adapt the model of the Contract. This year's election will primarily be a referendum on President Obama and the Democrats, just as 1994 was a referendum on the Democrats of the early Clinton years. This is as it should be: The Democrats made huge gains in 2006 and 2008, had enough power in Washington to set an ambitious agenda without serious Republican input, and did so. Republicans have

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largely opposed the way Democrats have seen fit to use their vast power, and it is entirely reasonable for the upcoming election to turn on their performance.

In 2009 Republicans had to establish their identity as a party of principled opposition to Obama's agenda, and that task will take up much of 2010 as well. Democrats may delight in calling Republicans "the party of no." But the GOP will be much better off so defined than defined as "the party of us too" or "the party of we're not sure." Eventually, however, Republicans also have to become identified with their own popular policies. If they do, they can portray the Democrats' proposals as part and parcel of a status quo with which Americans are dissatisfied but whose worst bureaucratic features the Democrats wish to build on. If they don't, it will be much easier for the Democrats to portray themselves as the reformers. And the Democrats will continue to set the policy agenda.

Some of the elements of a new Republican Contract (whatever it ends up being called) can easily be outlined. The public of 1994 was disgusted with a political class that had run up the deficit while generating a series of scandals—sound familiar?—so much of the Contract with America involved political reform. It forced votes on bills to make Congress live under the rules it legislated for the private sector, to provide funding for any tasks it ordered state and local governments to undertake, and to limit its members' time in office. Few of these procedural reforms really addressed the fundamental flaws of liberal governance, but all of them put Republicans on record as opposed to self-serving business as usual.

In 2010, Republicans will want to get on the right side of voter anger again—and also point out that Democrats' pledges to run Congress openly and ethically have been broken. Useful, or at least harmless, reforms can again be undertaken. Putting the full text of all bills online for 72 hours before a vote has become a popular cause; look for it in a new Contract. Pay for government employees has been booming at a time of private-sector layoffs. There's another issue for the Contract. Congressional perks ought to be examined, too. Members of Congress, even those who are not veterans, get to be treated at military facilities such as Walter Reed. Why? And congressional pensions could stand to be reined in.

If the Democrats' health-care legislation is enacted, replacing it ought to be at the top of the Republicans' domestic-policy to-do list. The public knows that Republicans are prepared to exploit anti-Obamacare sentiment. It does not know that Republicans are prepared to fight for something better. Making a pledge to replace Obamacare with more reasonable policies would help.

Republicans will be tempted to run on a promise of "no new bailouts." To be credible, however, that promise will have to be coupled with two other things: a plan to unwind the federal government's existing holdings (in, for example, the auto industry) and a plan to keep financial institutions from using government policy to become too important to fail.

In 1980, 1994, and 2000, Republicans won elections in part by promising to cut middle-class taxes. They made no such pledge in 2006 or 2008. It may not be a coincidence that they got pummeled. "One element [of a new contract] should be tax policies that are pro-growth and pro-family," says former congressman and Republican strategist Vin Weber.

Americans are more concerned about the national debt than they have been in years—but not yet on board for any specific step to reduce it. On this issue, too, Republicans badly need something plausible to say. A Contract that omits mention of the debt or fights it with platitudes will enrage the tea-party movement.

And while people do not worry enough about global warming to be willing to sacrifice their standard of living to fight it, they do worry. Republicans ought to promote new energy technologies in order to reduce the risks of global warming without doing the sort of economic damage that cap-and-trade legislation would entail. This issue too belongs in any new Republican agenda.

The original Contract with America was even more important after the 1994 elections than it was beforehand. It gave House Republicans a template for their first hundred days in power; they didn't wake up the day after the election and have to scramble to devise an agenda. It also created the potent illusion politicians call a "mandate." Here, too, today's situation offers a parallel. If Republicans do not come up with a common policy agenda, they might still be able to gain power in the elections—only to find that they have no idea what to do with it. **NR**

Institutional Earthquake

One is needed, for the good of those who suffer the geologic kind

BY IAIN MURRAY

THE tragic images we have all seen coming out of Haiti remind us that earthquakes give no respect to political power or reputation. The presidential palace and the U.N. mission tumbled just as surely as one-room shacks; being rich was no protection against nature's whim. But if there is one thing we do know about natural disasters, it is that a generally wealthier society is more resilient. Unfortunately, the United Nations continues to ignore basic facts about resiliency in favor of politically correct shibboleths.

The Haitian earthquake is certainly among the ten deadliest earthquakes on record. If the death toll tops 255,000, it will overtake the Tangshan, China, earthquake of 1976 as the second-deadliest ever. (It is unlikely to rate higher than the 1556 quake in Shaanxi, China, which killed close to a million people.) Compare those death tolls with that of the great San Francisco quake of 1906, which killed just 3,000, and you will begin to realize that even when quakes of similar magnitude strike similarly large population centers, there is some factor besides earthquake strength and population size affecting the fatality level. That factor is resiliency, and it protects against all natural disasters.

Resiliency is tied closely to wealth. A good example of resiliency in action can be seen in the tale of two hurricanes that struck the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico. Fifty years ago, Hurricane Janet slammed into the Yucatán and killed 500 people. In 2007, Hurricane Dean hit the Yucatán and killed no one. The hurricanes were identical in speed and intensity. What was different was that in 2007 Mexico had grown richer and invested in institutions to protect its population.

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One insurance firm found that when Hurricane Katrina hit, the places that had implemented simple hurricane-loss-prevention methods such as special building codes, improved forecasting, and wetlands protection suffered one-eighth the losses of those that had not done so. By spending $2.5 million, these communities avoided $500 million in damage.

The last hundred years saw a significant investment by humanity worldwide in the institutions of resiliency. That is why, contra the claims of alarmist environmentalists, the death toll from natural disasters fell significantly over that century. One can see this pattern in the United States: The 1906 San Francisco earthquake killed 3,000, but a similar quake there in 1989 killed just 63.

So what are the institutions of resiliency? A 2005 report from the Sustainable Development Network (SDN), prepared for the U.N.'s World Conference on Disaster Reduction, does a good job of listing them. "Disasters and Development," available at www.policy-network.net, emphasizes the following.

In general, wealth correlates with greater resiliency. This claim is backed up by data from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, of all places, which finds a strong correlation between overall poverty and vulnerability to natural disasters (Haiti placed 17th in terms of risk). As people grow richer, they demand more security over uncertainty. They therefore demand insurance, and companies respond by competing for business and making insurance cheaper, meaning a virtuous circle of insurance develops (although this can be broken by government subsidies' encouraging risky behavior such as building in flood zones). Wealthier people are also more able to help their neighbors via charitable networks (although, again, these can be disrupted by government's taking over charitable roles).

Further, the institutions that encourage wealth and the development of insurance markets and charitable networks are similar across the globe. Property rights resolve competing claims over resources; poor countries almost universally lack well-defined, readily enforceable property rights. Contracts underpin the functioning of markets and are an essential part of freedom of association. The rule of law guarantees transactions and keeps contracts free from political interference. Open trade encourages competition, fosters innovation, and enables people to convert the wealth represented by their property into capital. Good governance, enabled by transparency and accountability among officials, is also crucial.

Corruption can undermine or even eliminate all of these institutions. In fact, there is a very strong correlation between countries' vulnerability to natural disaster and their ratings on Transparency International's annual Corruption Perception Index. Its 2009 survey found only seven countries out of 180 with a worse corruption score than Haiti's.

As the SDN report concluded, "the 'solution' proposed by some politicians in rich and poor countries—more foreign aid—is unlikely to actually improve the situation." The 2005 conference mentioned above produced something called the "Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015," a 21-page document that includes all the buzzwords about helping to build resiliency but avoids discussing the institutions required for this or even mentioning corruption. Instead, it emphasizes such important factors as that "a gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes."

In general, wealth correlates with greater resiliency.

This is perhaps to be expected. A less obvious but more pertinent example of how the U.N. approach misses the mark is the prominence given in the SDN report to information management and exchange. Information exchange is indeed critical in the avoidance of damage, but the U.N. report simply ignores the reality of information in poor and corrupt countries, failing to analyze the underlying reasons that information exchange is such a problem in them. As Barun Mitra of the Liberty Institute in India noted when discussing the role of information in the 2004 tsunami:

> Centralizing information flow, as most governments in India have tended to do, more often than not defeats the very purpose of that information. In fact, at the end it leaves even the government in a blind. It is no coincidence that even 48 hours after the sea surges, no information was available from many parts of the affected areas, and consequently, speedy relief did not reach these areas.

Simply put, governments that do not foster the institutions of resiliency, and that tolerate or encourage corruption, will not be able to facilitate the free flow of important information. It takes a truly open society to do that. But the U.N. refuses to acknowledge these facts because doing so would elevate Anglosphere values over others, and that is something that the U.N. cannot do.

Bearing this in mind, it should come as no surprise that while the United Nations has supposedly been overseeing the reconstruction of Haiti since 1993, precious little has been achieved in the reduction of corruption or the building of an open society. Much has been made of the lack of enforced building codes in Haiti (as earthquake researchers put it, quakes don't kill people, buildings kill people). In the absence of good governance and the rule of law, however, a building code means nothing, because an inspector sees permits as a source of income and a builder sees them as a tax to be avoided.

If the poorest nations are to be saved from their vicious cycle of corruption, poverty, and disaster, someone has to take the lead from the U.N. and actually promote the institutions of resiliency. In the absence of anyone else willing to do it (the British Commonwealth would have been well placed, had British politicians not decided to let it wither on the vine), that someone should be America. Congress can instruct USAID and the administration to make resiliency the focus of its overseas aid and disaster-prevention efforts. It could do this by tying aid to the building of the institutions of resiliency and providing frank advice where they are lacking. This may not be a politically correct approach, but it will result in a wealthier, healthier world, and that will be a geopolitical earthquake of a beneficial kind. **NR**

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Assimilating Down

The trends concerning Hispanic mobility should have us alarmed

BY DUNCAN CURRIE

If Rep. Luis Gutierrez gets his way, Americans will soon be engaged in another bare-knuckled brawl over the future of U.S. immigration policy. On December 15, the Illinois Democrat unveiled a "comprehensive" reform bill that would create a path to citizenship for millions of immigrants who are residing in the United States illegally. Dozens of House members have signed on as co-sponsors. Should President Obama and Democratic leaders launch an aggressive push for the legislation, we can expect a replay of the high-octane immigration battles that erupted in 2006 and 2007. Indeed, the bickering this time around could be even more raucous because of the weak economy. (Last time, the national unemployment rate was below 5 percent.)

A few days before Gutierrez introduced his bill, Pew Hispanic Center released an extensive study of young Hispanics—those aged 16 to 25—and their uneven assimilation into mainstream American society. Roughly two-thirds were born in the U.S., and about the same proportion have Mexican ancestry. An estimated 22 percent are illegal immigrants. The Pew study found that Hispanic youths appreciate the value of a college degree, believe that hard work pays off, and aspire to have successful careers; but it also highlighted social and educational trends that are hindering Hispanics' upward mobility—an issue that should be central to any debate over immigration reform.

Pew reckons that in 2008, more than half of young Hispanics had family incomes under 200 percent of the federal poverty level, compared with 38 percent of all youths and 29 percent of non-Hispanic white youths. While foreign-born Hispanics had significantly higher poverty rates than their native-born counterparts, 21 percent of young Hispanics from the third generation and later belonged to poor families, compared with 13 percent of young non-Hispanic whites.

These income gaps are fueled by parental and educational disparities. In 2007, the birth rate among Hispanic women aged 15 to 19 was 82 per 1,000, which was nearly twice the birth rate among all women in that demographic. Hispanics lag well behind the general population when it comes to finishing high school: The dropout rate among Hispanics aged 16 to 24 is 17.2 percent, compared with 9.3 percent among non-Hispanic blacks and 5.7 percent among non-Hispanic whites. That is a result of the staggeringly high dropout rate (32.9 percent) among first-generation Hispanic immigrants.

Close to a third of Hispanics aged 16 to 25 can identify a past or present gang member among their family and friends. Once again, there is a divide between the foreign-born and native-born—but it's not the divide you might expect. Native-born Hispanic youths (especially those of Mexican descent) are actually much *more* likely to know a gang member than are young Hispanic immigrants. They're also more likely to get in fights, carry weapons, and be questioned by the police.

These data raise serious concerns about Hispanic mobility and assimilation. So do recent health-care statistics. Columnist Robert Samuelson points out that Hispanics accounted for roughly 60 percent of the growth of America's uninsured between 1999 and 2008. By the end of that period, Hispanics represented less than 16 percent of the overall U.S. population but 31.4 percent of those who lacked health insurance at any given time, according to the Census Bureau. The 2008 National Health Interview Survey found that 34 percent of non-elderly (under age 65) Hispanics reported being uninsured, compared with just 14 percent of non-elderly non-Hispanics. About 43 percent of those uninsured Hispanics said they had *never* been insured, compared with only 15 percent of the non-Hispanic uninsured. (Bear in mind that some people who reported being uninsured might have been eligible for or enrolled in Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program.)

As Samuelson indicates, the uncertainty of immigration flows makes it difficult to predict how much the Democrats' health-care legislation would reduce the number of uninsured. Over the past few decades, the Hispanic population has exploded. Latin America provided half of all the immigrants who came to the U.S. between 1965 (when LBJ dramatically liberalized the immigration system) and 2008; Mexico alone provided 29 percent. While stronger border enforcement and the economic downturn have contributed to a steep drop in Mexican immigration since the mid-2000s, a July 2009 Pew study concluded that there had *not* been an uptick in migration back to Mexico.

The Census Bureau calculates that Hispanics made up almost one-sixth of the U.S. population in 2008. As Pew observes, they had a much bigger population share in certain states, such as New Mexico (45.1 percent), California (36.6 percent), Texas (36.2 percent), and Arizona (30.2 percent). Twenty-five percent of all American children under age five were Hispanic, as were 22 percent of all children under 18. The median age of Hispanics (27.7) was more than nine years lower than the median age of the entire population (36.8). Hispanic females have a substantially higher fertility rate than black, white, and Asian women. The Census Bureau has projected that approximately one out of every four U.S. residents will be Hispanic by mid-century.

That's why Hispanic social mobility is so critically important to America's future. Unfortunately, says Duke University economist Jacob Vigdor, the children of Mexican immigrants appear to be "assimilating down" into an underclass culture. So much about contemporary Mexican immigration is unprecedented, he adds: America has never absorbed such a massive and continuous flow of migrants from one country for such an extended period; and no U.S. immigrant group has ever been so heavily undocumented. Vigdor thinks the current lull in Mexican immigration will be temporary.

In his new book, *From Immigrants to Americans*, Vigdor shows that, while Mexican immigrants gradually improve their economic standing over time, they have lower rates of naturalization, weaker English capabilities, and much smaller incomes than other immigrant groups. Indeed, says Vigdor, unlike their predecessors in the late 1800s and early 1900s, today's U.S. immigrants arrive with wildly varying skills. In an era when the college wage premium has skyrocketed and the number of well-paying low-skilled jobs has rapidly declined, those immigrants at the upper end of the skill distribution (such as Chinese and Indians)

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enjoy a huge structural advantage over those at the bottom (such as Mexicans and Central Americans).

Vigdor argues that Mexicans' sluggish economic performance can be explained largely by their education deficit. In the Census Bureau's 2007 American Community Survey, he notes, fewer than 5 percent of Mexicans reported having a college degree. According to an October 2009 Pew study, nearly one-third of Hispanics aged 25 to 29 do not have a high-school diploma, compared with just 11 percent of all 25- to 29-year-olds. Only 12 percent of Hispanics in that same demographic have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 31 percent of the general population.

In their 2009 book, *The Latino Education Crisis*, professors Patricia Gándara of UCLA and Frances Contreras of the University of Washington observe that the percentage of Hispanics with college degrees has been stagnant since the 1980s. Certain Hispanic immigrant groups seem to hit a "ceiling" of educational attainment "after the third generation," if not sooner. "Never before have we been faced with a population group on the verge of becoming the majority in significant portions of the country that is also the lowest performing academically," write Gándara and Contreras. "And never before has the economic structure been less forgiving to the undereducated."

Hispanics are plagued by an attainment gap, and also by an achievement gap. The latter can be seen in the National Assessment of Educational Progress math and reading test results. In 2005, according to a National Education Association report, just 68 percent of Hispanic fourth-graders and 52 percent of Hispanic eighth-graders demonstrated "basic" proficiency in math; only 46 percent of Hispanic fourth-graders and 56 percent of Hispanic eighth-graders reached that performance level in reading. (For non-Hispanic whites, the percentages were 90, 80, 76, and 82, respectively.)

Educational progress among Hispanics has been hampered by a variety of social and cultural factors. For example, an increasingly large proportion of Hispanic children are being born out of wedlock. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the nonmarital-birth ratio among Hispanics grew from 23.6 percent in 1980 to 51.3 percent in 2007. A May 2009 Pew paper estimated that the share of Hispanic children living in married-couple families is 69 percent among children of the first generation but only 52 percent among those of the third generation and beyond.

In terms of cognitive development, many Hispanics are falling behind middle-class whites at a very early age, according to a new study from the University of California, Berkeley. Sociologist Bruce Fuller and several other researchers determined that, while Hispanic newborns are known for their "robust birth weight and low mortality rates," their cognitive growth between 9 months and 24 months trails that of middle-class white children. The researchers attributed this to the low levels of education among Hispanic mothers, their insufficient pre-literacy activities, and the higher child-to-adult ratios in Hispanic households. Simply put: Hispanic toddlers are, on balance, growing up in family environments that are less conducive to learning the skills needed to succeed in school.

Hispanic toddlers are, on balance, receiving less cultural capital from their parents than are middle-class white toddlers.

Much of the political oxygen in recent immigration squabbles has been consumed by border security and amnesty. Those are hardly trivial issues, but a comprehensive discussion would focus intensely on Hispanic social mobility. Vigdor says there is ample reason to be worried about "the breakdown of the Great American Assimilation Machine." As Gándara and Contreras put it, "If the high dropout rates and low educational achievement of Latino youth are not turned around, we will have created a permanent underclass without hope of integrating into the mainstream or realizing their potential to contribute to American society." **NR**

Balancing Act

Conservatives weigh means against ends as liberal opinion-makers embrace teacher accountability and school choice

BY STEPHEN SPRUIELL

THE Obama administration's signature education initiative, Race to the Top, has produced genuine headline news: The Democrats, usually seen kowtowing to organized labor's demands, for once are standing up to a powerful union constituency. The Race to the Top grant competition would remunerate states for using students' test scores in teacher evaluations, a practice the teachers unions have fought for years. A number of conservative reformers are backing the measure, but Texas governor Rick Perry, a Republican, recently announced that his state would not participate in Race to the Top. What's the catch?

The situation is reminiscent of another time Democrats stood up to organized labor: in the early 1990s, when Bill Clinton backed passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) over the objections of the unions. In both cases, the fight between the Democratic party and its union backers dominated the media's coverage. But then as now, a different and more interesting question preoccupied conservatives: Does the policy in question cede too much local power to a national or transnational authority?

At the heart of the question is a debate over means and ends. Not many conservatives in the 1990s argued, as the unions did, that NAFTA would result in the loss of tens of thousands of American jobs. Nor do many conservatives today side with the teachers unions in support of rules that make it nearly impossible to fire incompetent educators. In each case, mountains of empirical evidence slowly persuaded liberal elites and Democratic reformers to agree at least partially with conservatives that a certain end—free trade and teacher accountability, respectively—was worth pursuing.

By 1993, it was no longer plausible to argue that free trade was on balance deleterious to a nation's prosperity. Economists across the political spectrum agreed then, and still do, that removing trade

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barriers between two countries allows each to increase its total output and thereby grow richer. The only intellectually defensible way to argue against free trade is to make the debate about something other than wealth, such as equality, labor rules, or environmental standards. In the NAFTA debate, accordingly, opponents argued that U.S. companies would move jobs requiring fewer skills to Mexico, weakening the power of unions to bid up the price of unskilled labor and causing the gap between rich and poor to widen.

But liberal opinion-makers were not persuaded that the country should sacrifice its overall prosperity to preserve union clout. NAFTA supporter Michael Kinsley, then of *The New Republic*, zeroed in on the opposition's advantage in the debate when he wrote that "the person who will get a job because of NAFTA isn't even aware of it yet; the person who may lose a job because of NAFTA is all too aware." *Newsweek* admonished Americans to "beware the new protectionist preachings. Trade is good for you." And the most influential liberal in the country, Bill Clinton, supported NAFTA.

It is equally difficult to argue now that teacher quality and student test scores are not correlated. Empirical studies from groups such as the New Teacher Project, Teach for America, and the Brookings Institution have demonstrated that teachers matter, and that test scores are a reliably accurate tool for measuring how much they matter. A Brookings study of Los Angeles public schools published in 2006 concluded that "having a top-quartile teacher rather than a bottom-quartile teacher four years in a row would be enough to close the black-white test score gap."

As in the debate over free trade, liberal journalists and policymakers are increasingly embracing the evidence. I first learned of the Brookings study from a Steven Brill article in *The New Yorker* that absolutely eviscerated New York's United Federation of Teachers for blocking reforms that would make it easier for schools to use tests in teacher evaluations. Amanda Ripley of *The Atlantic* recently wrote about Teach for America's groundbreaking efforts to track test-score data, link it to each of the organization's teachers, and use it to assess their effectiveness. Bob Herbert, the *New York Times* columnist, wrote a column in January praising Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, for her grudging acceptance of the notion that standardized test scores should be part of the evaluation process. (The National Education Association, AFT's much larger cousin, remains opposed.)

In large part, these journalists are following the administration's lead. Obama's appointment of former Chicago public-schools CEO Arne Duncan to lead the Department of Education was viewed by many conservatives as a decent pick, based on Duncan's advocacy of teacher accountability and charter schools. Race to the Top reflects Duncan's support for these concepts: States with laws prohibiting the use of test scores in teacher evaluations are not eligible to compete for the $4.3 billion in grant money available under the program, and other eligibility requirements encourage states to lift caps on charter schools. In general, states make themselves more attractive applicants the farther they move in the directions of accountability and choice.

This is not to say that Obama has been great, or even good, on education. To the dismay of conservatives and inner-city Washington parents, he signed a bill that stripped the District of Columbia's school-voucher program of its funding. He supports a bill that would effectively nationalize the provision of student loans. And one of his appointments to the Department of Education, Kevin Jennings, founded a group that advocated the inclusion of gay-and-lesbian-themed literature on school reading lists, including books that contain graphic descriptions of sex acts between minors and adults.

For these reasons alone, conservatives would be right to approach any of this administration's education initiatives with a profound skepticism. But conservative objections to Race to the Top go beyond Obama himself. Many on the right (including NATIONAL REVIEW's editors) opposed President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act on the grounds that conservatives should fight any bill that entrenches the federal role in education—even if, in theory, it would put the government to work toward laudable ends. Governor Perry reflected this point of view in announcing that Texas would not apply for Race to the Top funds: "Our state and our communities must reserve the right to decide how we educate our children, and not surrender control to the federal bureaucracy."

Few remember now, but similar sovereignty concerns bedeviled some conservatives when Bill Clinton, in an effort to make NAFTA more palatable to union interests and environmentalists, negotiated side agreements on labor and the environment to placate them. Conservatives worried that these deals would create panels with authority to recommend sanctions and other measures to compel compliance.

Though the sovereignty concerns were not without merit, those powers of punishment have proven to be a net benefit in the enforcement of U.S. trade agreements. Consider the World Trade Organization (WTO). One of the best things about the WTO is that it presents a solution to the problem of concentrated benefits and dispersed costs. The Bush administration's decision to levy tariffs on imported steel imposed a tax on steel consumers for the benefit of a few domestic steel companies. The WTO ruled against the U.S. and authorized the EU to levy retaliatory sanctions, thus concentrating the cost of the tariffs on other industries, which were better organized than steel consumers and better able to fight back. Under pressure, Bush relented and repealed the tariffs.

Race to the Top seeks to address the same problem, using a carrot instead of a stick. Tenure rules and caps on charter schools benefit a powerful and well-organized special-interest group at the expense of unorganized taxpayers and parents. But state governments, going broke and desperate for federal funds, have already responded to Race to the Top's incentive structure. So far, eleven states have amended or repealed bad laws to make themselves more competitive candidates for the money, despite union opposition.

Conservatives have legitimate concerns about delegating power over education to the federal government. But state governments have their own flaws, which a little delegated power can mitigate. It's a delicate balance, and it's hard to say right now whether Race to the Top tilts too far in the direction of centralized decision-making. But at least conservatives can take heart that the tide of elite opinion is turning against the teachers unions—and in favor of accountability and choice. **NR**

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Defanged

Once upon a time, the living dead were scary

BY JOHN J. MILLER

A TRAILER for the new movie *Daybreakers* invites us to "imagine a world where almost everyone is a vampire."

That shouldn't be too hard. It seems like we're already living in one.

Vampires are everywhere. At the start of 2010, the four novels in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series ranked Nos. 2, 4, 5, and 9 on *USA Today*'s list of best-sellers. They've held spots in this range for a couple of years—it might be said that they've refused to die—and recently they've spawned a pair of films that have grossed more than half a billion dollars combined. More are on the way. Plenty of other recent books (*Dead and Gone* by Charlaine Harris, *Vampire Academy* by Richelle Mead) and movies (*Cirque du Freak*, *Jennifer's Body*) also have featured the bloodsucking undead. On TV, *The Vampire Diaries* is the most-watched show on the CW network. *True Blood* has aired on HBO for two seasons and has commitments for two more. It recently launched a jewelry line. A clasp necklace with rubies shaped like drops of blood retails for $1,295. One of the hottest rock bands of the moment is Vampire Weekend. Its latest release, put out on January 11, quickly became the most downloaded album on iTunes.

I dig vampires as much as the next guy who has read Bram Stoker's *Dracula* three or four times, goes out of his way to watch monster movies, and thinks "Bela Lugosi's Dead" by Bauhaus is one of the coolest songs ever recorded. Yet the present ubiquity of vampires is too much, even for me. Once upon a time, vampires were creepy and haunting. Now they're yawn-inducing bores. Perhaps they've finally reached their cultural expiration date. At the very least, they should crawl back into their coffins and give the rest of us a break.

H. P. Lovecraft, the great 20th-century horror writer, explained the aesthetics of terror: "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown." The problem with vampires is that there's nothing left to fear because there's nothing left to know. At one point in their progression through pop culture, it took a purveyor of arcane wisdom like Abraham Van Helsing to defeat them. Nowadays, every fifth grader has memorized the fundamentals of vampire slaying: crucifixes, garlic, sunlight, and so on. They've become Halloween clichés.

But that's not the worst part. Vampires probably can survive a certain level of familiarity as long as they also remain menaces who want to puncture our necks and steal our souls. Lately, however, too many vampires have taken a kinder, gentler turn. They've gone from sinister villains who deserve to have

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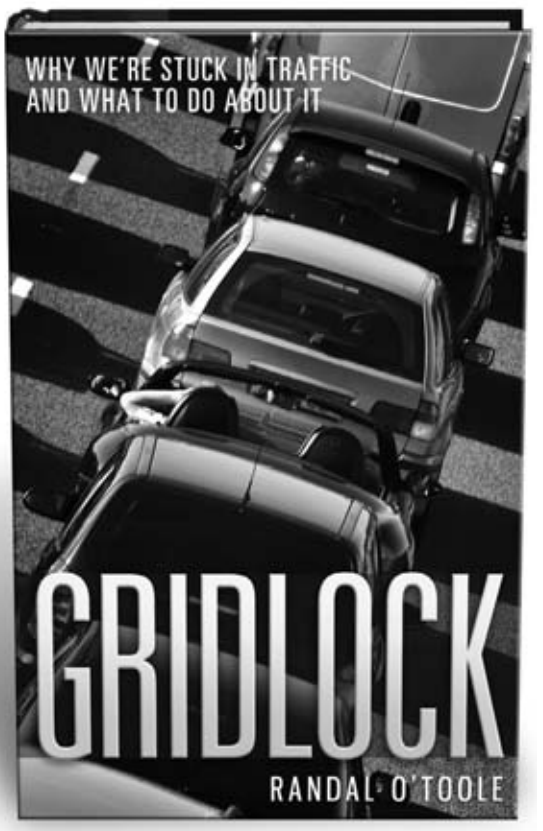

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wooden stakes pounded into their chests to tender-hearted friends and lovers who yearn for our compassion. The main character in *Daybreakers* is a guilt-ridden vampire hematologist who wants to find a cure for vampirism and save humanity. In *Twilight*, the pouting male protagonist slurps the blood of animals so he doesn't have to stalk human prey. Both of these guys also have great hair—and not on the palms of their hands, like the original Dracula, who also smelled really bad. The fashion-plate vampires of today are undead metrosexuals: sharp-dressed men with sharp teeth.

These vapid vampires have traveled a long way from their sources. As with so many legends that arise from old folk traditions, the precise origins of vampire tales are pleasingly obscure. They have their genesis in Eastern Europe, especially Hungary, as well as rough corollaries in many other cultures. In the 18th century, Goethe wrote a poem about a vampire. In the 19th century, British writers began to appropriate the concept. The first popular story in the genre, "The Vampyre," by John William Polidori, was published in 1819. The first really good vampire story—i.e., one still worth reading today—is *Carmilla*, an 1872 novella by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. Then came Bram Stoker. His 1897 novel *Dracula* is the work against which all vampire stories, on page and screen, are compared and contrasted. A generation later, movies breathed additional life into horror's best franchise: *Nosferatu* in 1922, *Dracula* in 1931, and a never-ending stream of sons, brides, and reboots.

The quality of all this has ranged from the slapdash to the iconic—and the genre's resilience has demonstrated the enduring power of vampire mythology. When done well, these books and films can be first-rate pieces of entertainment. An Edith Wharton character once said ghost stories appeal because they offer "the fun of the shudder." Vampire tales provide the same thrill. They also present rich opportunities for allegory and metaphor. On one level, they can be about Transylvanians who shape-shift into bats. On another level, they can deliver messages about mortality, addiction, parasitic relationships, sexual taboos, and blood-borne epidemics.

Just about every accomplished writer of horror has dabbled with vampires. Stephen King's second novel, *'Salem's Lot*, published in 1975, is about a small town in Maine and its harrowing encounter with the living dead. In many ways, it's a tradition-bound book: King always has paid homage to his genre predecessors. More important, the story itself is traditional. The plot boils down to a confrontation between good and evil. Human beings are on the side of truth and light while vampires prefer deception and darkness.

About the same time, however, other writers took a different approach. They began to write stories from the perspective of vampires. Anne Rice wasn't the first to do it, but her *Interview with the Vampire*, released in 1976, became the most popular and influential of the type. It twisted the entire genre around. Suddenly, vampires lobbied for our sympathy. Good? Evil? It's complicated. With *Twilight*, the transformation is complete. Vampires aren't fiends who threaten us with eternal damnation; they're handsome hipsters whom our daughters want to date.

The trend isn't isolated to vampires. In *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*, the 1957 book by Dr. Seuss, the Grinch is cursed with a heart that is "two sizes too small." This is the only motive he needs to wreak holiday havoc. In the more recent film version starring Jim Carrey, however, the screenwriters invent a background story for the Grinch. It turns out that his rage at the denizens of Who-ville is entirely justified. A similar inversion fuels *Wicked*, the novel-turned-musical inspired by *The Wizard of Oz*. It lets the Wicked Witch of the West tell her side of the story. When we see things from her point of view, we learn that she's not malevolent but misunderstood.

The evolution of vampires, Grinches, and witches is a variation on the theme of defining deviancy down. There was a time when we knew a monster when we saw one—and understood that some nasties need to have their heads chopped off and their mouths stuffed with garlic. Nowadays, however, vampirism and its related maladies are just alternative lifestyles. Condemning them is an unforgivable rendering of judgment and a crime against the imperatives of moral relativism. A society that has trouble recognizing monsters in its art probably will have difficulty identifying terrorists at its airports.

And its horror stories will become bloodless. When everybody's perspective is equally valid, vampires lose their bite. We may have gained friends, but we've lost enemies—and a world without enemies is the stuff of a dull utopian fairytale. **NR**

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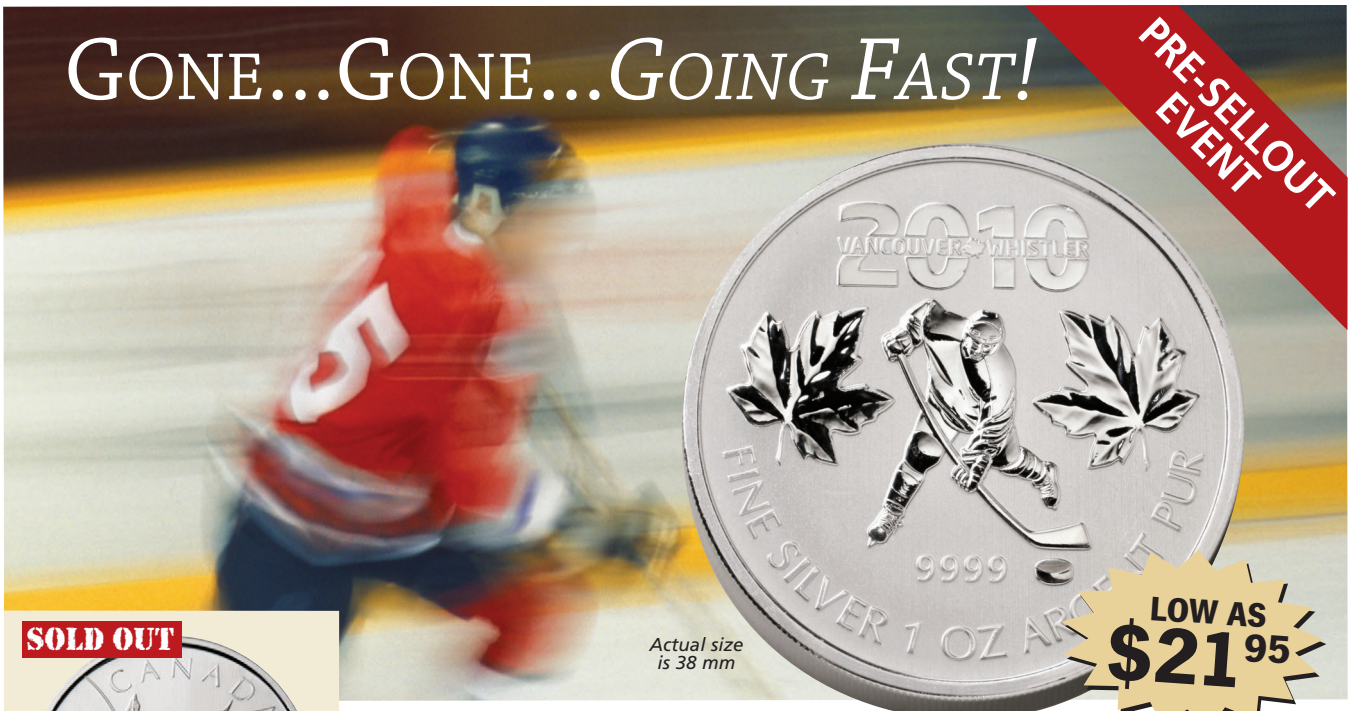

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Keeping Blacks Poor

How the Democratic party stands between its most loyal constituents and the jobs they need

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

"MAY I HAVE YOUR UNDIVIDED ATTENTION PLEASE!" Small guy, big mouth: He's maybe 15, black, skinny kid, but his voice fills up the noisy New York City subway car and then some. "I am selling candy! I got Snickers! I got Peanut M&Ms! I am trying to make some money! This isn't for school, this isn't for a basketball team, this is for ME! So I can get more candy and MAKE MORE MONEY!" The straphangers appreciate his no-malarkey sales pitch and his entrepreneurial spirit. He does a bit of business, and a few people just give him a buck and skip the candy. His name is Will, and he is not turning down a dollar. But it's a tough hustle: Accounting for the cost of his product and his subway pass, it takes him about three hours to earn $20 free and clear, an implied wage of $6.67 an hour—well under minimum wage. On the other hand, it's tax-free, and he sets his own hours. Will wants to go to college—and then what? "Be an independent businessman." He's already that, and, if persistence really does pay, he's going to do fine for himself.

There's a whole weird little economy on the subway, from candy hustlers like Will to the Chinese ladies who sell pirated DVDs of movies that have just opened in the cinemas. There are acrobats and mariachi bands, good old-fashioned panhandlers, poets, preachers, and percussionists. It's all part of the famous entrepreneurial bustle of New York. But stay on that No. 4 train a few more stops, north of Harlem and into the Bronx, and that entrepreneurial energy evaporates. Not far from the Kingsbridge Road stop is the Eighth Regiment Armory, a fantastically out-of-place 575,000-square-foot brick castle. It's been a lot of different things over the years—barracks, homeless shelter, boat-show venue, a pre-creepified set for Will Smith's *I Am Legend*—but it currently is vacant, as are a lot of buildings in the Bronx. Passing by, late on a weekday morning, is a local who calls himself "C," a black man as sturdily built as the armory itself. C very much wants a cigarette. This is a problem, because he is not currently in funds, in no small part because he does not have a job. In fact, at 35 years old, C has never held a job. His friends, acquaintances, known associates (C is a little foggy on whether he's on probation or parole, but he's got some known associates): no jobs, never really had them. His father? Do not ask C about his father. In fact, the only people C can think of who have jobs are women: His mother worked, the mother of his children works. He did know a woman who was dating a taxi driver once. C says he would like to work but is more of an independent businessman. He describes the informal work he has done as "this and that," and says he would like to "have his own place," a bar or a nightclub. But don't expect to see him selling candy on the No. 4 train anytime soon.

Asked about the recently defeated plan to convert the gigantic fortress that looms over his neighborhood into a shopping mall, C says he hasn't heard about it. If the plan had gone through, Manhattan-based developer Related Companies would have received about $50 million in tax subsidies for a project that would have created as many as a thousand retail jobs and, during its construction, employed a thousand or more highly paid union

DARREN GYGI

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hardhats. But the city council killed the project. The Bronx delegation demanded that Related enforce upon its leaseholders a requirement that all of the jobs in the mall pay at least $10 an hour, plus benefits, much more than the prevailing wage in the Forever21-and-food-court racket, to say nothing of the $7.25 minimum wage. So a $300 million project, and a couple of thousand new jobs in a neighborhood that needs them, never happened. Bronx borough president Ruben Diaz Jr. infamously declared: "The notion that any job is better than no job no longer applies." The *New York Post* pithily pointed out that when it comes to real jobs, Diaz has never had one—not in the private sector, anyway—and neither has any other member of the Bronx's city-council delegation: All are lifelong politicians, many of them having held elected offices or political appointments since their early 20s. Diaz himself has been an officeholder since he was 23 years old. It's good work, if you can get it.

But there's not much other work to be had in the Bronx, where unemployment is currently at about 13.1 percent. Much of the Bronx is young and black or young and Hispanic. Nationally, the unemployment rate among blacks *rose* to 16.2 percent in the year-end numbers, while the rate for whites *fell* to 9.0 percent. For black youths, the numbers are startling: 50 percent for 16–19-year-olds, 26 percent for 20–24-year-olds. A study from the Community Service Society of New York puts actual work-force participation among black men 16–65 years of age in New York City at about 50 percent, and the number for young black men nationwide is just 40 percent.

Never mind the jobless recovery: For a great many black Americans, it's been a jobless eternity, in good times and in bad. Why?

THE first answer many economists will give to that question is: the minimum wage. Milton Friedman, a Nobel laureate who spent much of his career showing how government programs reliably end up hurting those they are intended to help, was scathing on the subject, calling the minimum wage "one of the most, if not the most, anti-black laws on the statute books." And he's not alone: A congressional survey of economic research on the subject, "50 Years of Research on the Minimum Wage," has a string of conclusion lines that read like an indictment, the first three counts being: "The minimum wage reduces employment. The minimum wage reduces employment more among teenagers than adults. The minimum wage reduces employment most among black teenage males." Other items on the bill: "The minimum wage hurts small businesses generally. The minimum wage causes employers to cut back on training. The minimum wage has long-term effects on skills and lifetime earnings. The minimum wage hurts the poor generally. The minimum wage helps upper-income families. The minimum wage helps unions." Helping the affluent and high-wage union workers at the expense of the young, the poor, the unskilled, and small businesses: That amounts to a lot of different kinds of injustice, and it also amounts to a wealth transfer from blacks to whites.

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This is a disparity with its roots in history, but the roots don't go back to Reconstruction or the heyday of the Ku Klux Klan. They go back only to the 1960s. In 1954, young black men were in fact more likely to be employed than were their white counterparts, according to the economists Nabeel al-Salam, Aline Quester, and Finis Welch. The Fair Labor Standards Act, which established the minimum wage, had been passed in 1938, but wartime economic regimentation had postponed its full impact. "Marginal but employed blacks were the first ones to be laid off," says Prof. Paul D. Moreno of Hillsdale College, a labor historian. Originally modest in its scope, the act was repeatedly revised, both raising the minimum wage and expanding the range of businesses required to pay it. The act originally was restricted to interstate enterprises, but by 1961 the meaning of "interstate commerce" had been so greatly stretched that ordering a box of paper clips from an out-of-state supplier was enough to get a business covered by the minimum wage. As the application of the act grew, so did the disparity in black and white employment rates. Blacks, who had been employed mostly in smaller enterprises, often family-owned, found themselves competing on a straight dollar-per-hour basis with white entry-level workers who were on the whole better educated, better connected—and white. The racial realities of the time meant that the sorts of jobs affected by minimum-wage laws were the ones that were most open to blacks.

And it's not just that the minimum wage prices some low-productivity workers out of the labor market: It's that it prevents entry into the labor market in the first place for the most marginal would-be workers. If Will the candy hustler's real economic output is worth $6.67 an hour, his implied wage on the subway, he's unemployable with a $7.25 minimum wage. He can sell candy on the subway, but he can't sell candy for Big Candy Corp., make connections, learn what it's like to go to an office every day and have a boss, get references, get promoted, and sign up for the tuition-reimbursement program. And that, not the paltry lost income of a minimum-wage job, is the price he pays. Very few American workers actually earn the minimum wage—about 1 percent, in fact—but the minimum-wage job is a gateway into the labor force for many young workers. The value of your first job isn't the money you earn from it: It's your second job, and your third. With the right experience and network, a candyman like Will can do well for himself. But without that first job, he has a much higher chance of becoming a statistical blip on the long-term unemployment charts than a middle manager at Hershey or a salesman at Cadbury.

That's why economists call barriers like the minimum wage "cutting the bottom rung off the ladder." What's less often appreciated, though, is the network effect: A guy who's never gotten on the ladder himself cannot give you a hand up. Job-hunting is almost always an exercise in social networking: A friend of your dad helps you get a summer job, an old colleague recommends you for a position with his new firm. C up in the Bronx does not have a network like that: His friends and family are not in a position to tip him off about a job because they do not have jobs themselves, and, in some cases, never have. He doesn't have any former coworkers to recommend him for a new and better job. All he has is economically insulated politicians telling him that no job is better than a job that doesn't meet their political requirements.

The damage done by the minimum wage is real, but it's not the only impediment to black employment, and maybe not even the most serious one when it comes to the big cities. Black workers in Philadelphia, for example, have long complained about being excluded from the overwhelmingly white building-trades unions, the carpenters' and electrical-workers' guilds that are run by a largely Irish-American coterie headed by Pat Gillespie at the Building Trades Council and John J. Dougherty Jr. ("Johnny Doc") at the IBEW Local 98. Their unions are 80 percent white and 99 percent male, and the numbers are similar in other cities. Irritatingly for the Philadelphia politicians who are beholden to them, 70 percent of the building-trades unions' members live out in the suburbs rather than in the city. Wilson Goode Jr., a member of the Philadelphia city council, has made black workers' exclusion from the unions a key-note issue. He's a deep-dipped liberal, an affirmative-action supporter and a conventional urban Democrat in almost every respect, but he has noticed the strange fact that progressive programs sold as tools to help the city's largely black working class mostly end up putting money in the pockets of well-off white people in the suburbs. Philadelphia is a city with real black political power, but in a contest between a black city councilman working to secure good jobs for his constituents and the white union chieftains who have been running Philadelphia as a personal fiefdom since time immemorial, Wilson Goode Jr. found out who the boss is, and it's not him.

When the unions were salivating over the prospect of an expansive new project at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, Councilman Goode asked them for information about the racial composition of their work forces, and for a commitment to meet certain diversity goals. They more or less laughed at him—and got the work, anyway. "The issue of lack of diversity within the building trades came up during the convention-center project. There was no plan for opportunity in terms of diversity," Goode says. "We made a request from the building trades that they submit their demographics to city council, and actually set goals for expanding diversity within their unions. Interesting enough, the carpenters' union and electrical-workers' union, which did not comply, went on to work on the project, anyway. The goals that were set within those building-trade unions were not taken seriously." In fact, Goode says, the only times when black workers have gotten a fair shake on big projects have been those few occasions when the work is not held hostage by the labor mafia—for instance, a couple of open-shop weatherization projects conducted under the authority of the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation. Goode pressed to make the convention-center project open-shop, a proposal that was immediately crushed. "Going open-shop did not seem politically feasible," Goode says, with understatement. "The other option is the creation of new unions that have more people of color, more women, and more Philadelphia residents. And that's probably even less politically feasible."

The problem in the labor unions isn't really old-fashioned racism of the white-sheets and Jim Crow variety: Philadelphia is a city with plenty of poisonous racial politics, but it's not remarkable for them—worse than Atlanta, probably, but not as bad as Boston. What's really happening in the unions is a kind of expansive ethnic nepotism. Unions tend to find good positions and lots of work for people who are friends and family of current union members. Indeed, many in the building trades start

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on the path to union membership early in life. If those unions are dominated by Irish Americans, it's no surprise that a lot of the plums are going to the Kellys and Murphys, and not the Jacksons and Washingtons or the Garcias and Colóns. As *The Economist* puts it, "Blacks are also at a disadvantage when it comes to relying on friends and family connections to find jobs; there is not the same network of family businesses that whites and Latinos have. Some studies have found that this factor may explain as much as 70% of the difference in black and white unemployment rates, and may also explain the difference between black and Latino jobless rates. Among young men, for instance, the near-20% Hispanic unemployment rate is much closer to that for whites (17%) than blacks (30%)." The problem, of course, is self-perpetuating: The more blacks are out of work, and the longer they're out of work, the less of a network black job-seekers are going to have. And they can't count on the unions to help them out.

"The building trades were the most notorious for their discrimination," says Professor Moreno of Hillsdale, "along with the railroad brotherhoods, which were in a class by themselves in terms of how exclusive they were. If you look at the data, especially in the building trades, and compare them to the steelworkers or the autoworkers, the worst discrimination is in the building trades. In unions that have a lot of black membership, black workers got into those industries before the unions did. Henry Ford was hiring blacks before the UAW organized them. Steelmakers, same thing. Even in the UAW and the steelworkers, they have the problem of discrimination within the unions when it comes to training for skilled work, promotions, and issues of seniority." And it's been that way for generations: In fact, Moreno estimates that if the National Labor Relations Board had properly enforced anti-discrimination rules against the unions starting back in the 1930s—when they were first required to do so—then there would have been no demand for affirmative action later. Instead, the NLRB became a classic captured bureaucracy, seeing its role only as empowering the labor unions while turning a blind eye to the ugly racial discrimination in their ranks.

Democrats will defend everything from partial-birth abortion to distributing gay porn in the classroom, but some subjects are too hot for them to touch: The effect of their minimum-wage enthusiasm on black unemployment is one, and racial discrimination by their organized-labor constituents is another. You'd think that the Democrats would put jobs for blacks at the top of their list—after all, black voters pull the "D" lever about 90 percent of the time. But political calculations are perverse things: Black voters are a cheap date for Democrats, who know that they can sell out the interests of their most loyal constituency with impunity. One of Barack Obama's first actions in office was to gut a hugely popular school-choice program in Washington, D.C., that benefited black students almost exclusively, and he did so at the behest of the one of the most destructive unions in the country, one that has done more to undermine the future of black Americans than any other and whose members have inflicted more damage on black Americans than Bull Connor and George Wallace ever dreamed of. But the teachers' unions represent one in ten delegates to the Democratic National Convention, so they have job security—something many, if not most, of the young black men in their classes will never have. **NR**

A REPUBLIC, If You Want It

The Left's overreach invites the Founders' return

BY MATTHEW SPALDING

Our federal government, once limited to certain core functions, now dominates virtually every area of American life. Its authority is all but unquestioned, seemingly restricted only by expediency and the occasional budget constraint.

Congress passes massive pieces of legislation with little serious deliberation, bills that are written in secret and generally unread before the vote. The national legislature is increasingly a supervisory body overseeing a vast array of administrative policymakers and rulemaking agencies. Although the Constitution vests legislative powers in Congress, the majority of "laws" are promulgated in the guise of "regulations" by bureaucrats who are mostly unaccountable and invisible to the public.

Americans are wrapped in an intricate web of government policies and procedures. States, localities, and private institutions are submerged by national programs. The states, which increasingly administer policies emanating from Washington, act like supplicants seeking relief from the federal government. Growing streams of money flow from Washington to every congressional district and municipality, as well as to businesses, organizations, and individuals that are subject to escalating federal regulations.

This bureaucracy has become so overwhelming that it's not clear how modern presidents can fulfill their constitutional obligation to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed." President Obama, like his recent predecessors, has appointed a swarm of policy "czars"—*über*-bureaucrats operating outside the cabinet structure and perhaps the Constitution—to promote political objectives in an administration supposedly under executive control.

Is this the outcome of the greatest experiment in self-government mankind ever has attempted?

We can trace the concept of the modern state back to the theories of Thomas Hobbes, who wanted to replace the old order with an all-powerful "Leviathan" that would impose a new order, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who, to achieve absolute equality, favored an absolute state that would rule over the people through a vaguely defined concept called the "general will." It was Alexis de Tocqueville who first pointed out the potential for a new form of despotism in such a centralized, egalitarian state: It might not tyrannize, but it would enervate and extinguish liberty by reducing self-governing people "to being nothing more than

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a herd of timid and industrious animals of which the government is the shepherd."

The Americanized version of the modern state was born in the early 20th century. American "progressives," under the spell of German thinkers, decided that advances in science and history had opened the possibility of a new, more efficient form of democratic government, which they called the "administrative state." Thus began the most revolutionary change of the last hundred years: the massive shift of power from institutions of constitutional government to a labyrinthine network of unelected, unaccountable experts who would rule in the name of the people.

The great challenge of democracy, as the Founders understood it, was to restrict and structure the government to secure the rights articulated in the Declaration of Independence—preventing tyranny while preserving liberty. The solution was to create a strong, energetic government of limited authority. Its powers were enumerated in a written constitution, separated into functions and responsibilities and further divided between national and state governments in a system of federalism. The result was a framework of limited government and a vast sphere of freedom, leaving ample room for republican self-government.

PROGRESSIVES viewed the Constitution as a dusty 18th-century plan unsuited for the modern day. Its basic mechanisms were obsolete and inefficient; it was a reactionary document, designed to stifle change. They believed that just as science and reason had brought technological changes and new methods of study to the physical world, they would also bring great improvements to politics and society. For this to be possible, however, government could not be restricted to securing a few natural rights or exercising certain limited powers. Instead, government must become dynamic, constantly changing and growing to pursue the ceaseless objective of *progress*.

The progressive movement—under a Republican president, Theodore Roosevelt, and then a Democratic one, Woodrow Wilson—set forth a platform for modern liberalism to refound America according to ideas that were alien to the original Founders. "Some citizens of this country have never got beyond the Declaration of Independence," Wilson wrote in 1912. "All that progressives ask or desire is permission—in an era when 'development,' 'evolution,' is the scientific word—to interpret the Constitution according to the Darwinian principle; all they ask is recognition of the fact that a nation is a living thing and not a machine."

While the Founders went to great lengths to moderate democracy and limit government, the progressives believed that barriers to change had to be removed or circumvented, and government expanded. To encourage democratic change while directing and controlling it, the progressives posited a sharp distinction between politics and what they called "administration." Politics would remain the realm of expressing opinions, but the real decisions and details of governing would be handled by administrators, separate and immune from the influence of politics.

This permanent class of bureaucrats would address the particulars of accomplishing the broad objectives of reform, making decisions, most of them unseen and beyond public scrutiny, on the basis of scientific facts and statistical data rather than political opinions. The ruling class would reside in the recesses of a host of alphabet agencies such as the FTC (the Federal Trade Commission, created in 1914) and the SEC (the Securities and Exchange Commission, created in 1934). As "objective" and "neutral" experts, the theory went, these administrators would act above petty partisanship and faction.

The progressives emphasized not a *separation* of powers, which divided and checked the government, but rather a *combination* of powers, which would concentrate its authority and direct its actions. While seeming to advocate more democracy, the progressives of a century ago, like their descendants today, actually wanted the opposite: more centralized government *control*.

So it is that today, many policy decisions that were previously the constitutional responsibility of elected legislators are delegated to faceless bureaucrats whose "rules" have the full force and effect of laws passed by Congress. In writing legislation, Congress uses broad language that essentially hands legislative power over to agencies, along with the authority to execute rules and adjudicate violations.

The objective of progressive thinking, which remains a major force in modern-day liberalism, was to transform America from a decentralized, self-governing society into a centralized, progressive society focused on *national* ideals and the achievement of "social justice." Sociological conditions would be changed through government regulation of society and the economy; socioeconomic problems would be solved by redistributing wealth and benefits.

Liberty no longer would be a condition based on human nature and the exercise of God-given natural rights, but a changing concept whose evolution was guided by government. And since the progressives could not get rid of the "old" Constitution—this was seen as neither desirable nor possible, given its elevated status and historic significance in American political life—they invented the idea of a "living" Constitution that would be flexible and pliable, capable of "growth" and adaptation in changing times.

In this view, government must be ever more actively involved in day-to-day American life. Given the goal of boundless social progress, government by definition must itself be boundless. "It is denied that any limit can be set to governmental activity," prominent scholar (and later FDR adviser) Charles Merriam wrote, summarizing the views of his fellow progressive theorists. "The modern idea as to what is the purpose of the state has radically changed since the days of the 'Fathers,'" he continued, because

> the exigencies of modern industrial and urban life have forced the state to intervene at so many points where an immediate individual interest is difficult to show, that the old doctrine has been given up for the theory that the state acts for the general welfare. It is not admitted that there are no limits to the action of the state, but on the other hand it is fully conceded that there are no 'natural rights' which bar the way. The question is now one of expediency rather than of principle.

This intellectual construct began to attain political expression with targeted legislation, such as the Pure Food and Drug Act under TR and the Clayton Anti-Trust Act under President Wilson. These efforts were augmented by constitutional amendments that allowed the collection of a federal income tax to fund the national government and required the direct election of

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senators (thus undermining the federal character of the national legislature).

The trend continued under the New Deal. "The day of the great promoter or the financial Titan, to whom we granted everything if only he would build, or develop, is over," Franklin D. Roosevelt pronounced in 1932. "The day of enlightened administration has come." Although most of FDR's programs were temporary and experimental, they represented an expansion of government unprecedented in American society—as did the Supreme Court's late-1930s endorsement of the new "living" Constitution.

It was FDR who called for a "Second Bill of Rights" that would "assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness." Roosevelt held that the primary task of modern government is to alleviate citizens' want by guaranteeing their economic security. The implications of this redefinition are incalculable, since the list of economic "rights" is unlimited. It requires more and more government programs and regulation of the economy—hence the welfare state—to achieve higher and higher levels of happiness and well-being.

The administrative state took off in the mid-1960s with Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. By creating a truly national bureaucracy of open-ended social programs in housing, education, the environment, and urban renewal (most of which, such as the "War on Poverty," failed to achieve their goals), the Great Society and its progeny effected the greatest expansion of the administrative state in American history.

The Great Society also took the progressive argument one step farther, by asserting that the purpose of government no longer was "to secure these rights," as the Declaration of Independence says, but "to fulfill these rights." That was the title of Johnson's 1965 commencement address at Howard University, in which he laid out the shift from securing equality of opportunity to guaranteeing equality of outcome.

"It is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates," Johnson proclaimed. "We seek not just freedom but opportunity. We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result."

And now progressive reformism is back. We're witnessing huge increases in government spending, regulations, and programs. And as the national government becomes more centralized and bureaucratic, it will also become less democratic, and more despotic, than ever.

The tangled legislation supposedly intended to "reform" health care is a perfect example. It would regulate a significant segment of society that has been in progressives' crosshairs for over a hundred years. Nationalized health care was first proposed in 1904, modeled on German social insurance. It was in the Progressive party's platform of 1912. It came back under FDR and Truman, then Johnson, then Clinton, and now Obama. And the goal all along has had little to do with the quality of health care. The objective is rather to remove about a sixth of the economy from private control and bring it under the thumb of the state, whose "experts" will choose and ration its goods and services.

President Obama and the Democratic leadership prescribe a government-run health plan, burdensome mandates on employers, and massive new regulatory authority over health-care markets. Their requirement for individuals to buy insurance is unprecedented and unconstitutional: If the Commerce Clause can be used to regulate inactivity, then the government is truly without limit. They would transfer most decision-making to a collection of federal agencies, bureaus, and commissions such as the ominous-sounding "Health Choices Administration." And their legislation is packed with enough pork projects and corrupt deals to make even the hardest Tammany Hall operative blush.

It would be easier, of course, just to skip the legislative process, and when it comes to climate change that's exactly what the progressives are doing. In declaring carbon dioxide to be a dangerous pollutant, the Environmental Protection Agency essentially granted itself authority to regulate every aspect of American life—without any accountability to those pesky voters.

As the national government becomes more centralized and bureaucratic, it will also become less democratic, and more despotic, than ever.

The Left has long maintained that the administrative state is inevitable, permanent, and ever-expanding—the final form of "democratic" governance. The rise of progressive liberalism, they say, has finally gotten us over our love affair with the Founding and its archaic canons of natural rights and limited constitutionalism. The New Deal and the fruits of centralized authority brought most Democrats around to this view, and over time, many Republicans came to accept the progressive argument as well. Seeing responsible stewardship of the modern state and incremental reforms around its edges as the only viable option, these Republicans tried to make government more efficient, more frugal, and more compassionate—but never questioned its direction.

As a result, politics came to be seen as the ebb and flow between periods of "progress" and "change," on one hand, and brief interregnums to defend and consolidate the status quo, on the other. Other than the aberration of Ronald Reagan and a few unruly conservatives, there seemed to be no real challenge to the liberal project itself, so all the Democrats thought they had to do was wait for the bursting forth of the next great era of reformism. Was it to be launched by Jimmy Carter? Bill Clinton? At long last came the watershed election of Barack Obama.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the next revolution.

The Left's over-reading of the 2008 election gave rise to a vastly overreaching agenda that is deeply unpopular. Large numbers of citizens, many never before engaged in politics, are protesting in the streets and challenging their elected officials in town-hall

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meetings and on talk-radio shows. Forty percent of Americans now self-identify as conservatives—double the amount of liberals—largely because independents are beginning to take sides. Almost 60 percent believe the nation is on the wrong track.

Voters are deeply impassioned about a new cluster of issues—spending, debt, the role of government, the loss of liberty—that heretofore lacked a focal point to concentrate the public's anger. The *Washington Post* reports that "by 58 percent to 38 percent, Americans prefer smaller government and fewer services to larger government with more services. In the last year and a half, the margin between those favoring smaller over larger government has moved from five points to 20 points." Is it possible that Americans are waking up to the modern state's long train of abuses and usurpations?

There is something about a nation founded on principles, something unique in its politics that often gets shoved to the background but never disappears. Most of the time, American politics is about local issues and the small handful of policy questions that top the national agenda. But once in a while, it is instead about voters' stepping back and taking a longer view as they evaluate the present in the light of our founding principles. That is why all the great turning-point elections in U.S. history ultimately came down to a debate about the meaning and trajectory of America.

In our era of big government and the administrative state, the conventional wisdom has been that serious political realignment—bringing politics and government back into harmony with the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—is no longer possible. Yet we are seeing early indications that we may be entering a period of just such realignment. Perhaps the progressive transformation is incomplete, and the form of the modern state not yet settled—at least not by the American people.

This creates a historic opening for conservatives.

Growing opposition to runaway spending and debt, and to a looming government takeover of health care, doesn't necessarily mean that voters want to scrap Social Security or close down the Department of Education. But it may mean that they are ready to reembrace clear, enforceable limits on the state. The opportunity and the challenge for those who seek to conserve America's liberating principles is to turn the healthy public sentiment of the moment, which stands against a partisan agenda to revive an activist state, into a settled and enduring political opinion about the nature and purpose of constitutional government.

To do that, conservatives must make a compelling argument that shifts the narrative of American politics and defines a new direction for the country. We must present a clear choice: stay the course of progressive liberalism, which moves away from popular consent, the rule of law, and constitutional government, and toward a failed, undemocratic, and illiberal form of statism; or correct course in an effort to restore the conditions of liberty and renew the bedrock principles and constitutional wisdom that are the roots of America's continuing greatness.

The American people are poised to make the right decision. The strength and clarity of the Founders' argument, if given contemporary expression and brought to a decision, might well establish a governing conservative consensus and undermine the very foundation of the unlimited administrative state. It would be a monumental step on the long path back to republican self-government. **NR**

Two Inconvenient Canadians

The unlikely men who shook up global-warming science

BY JAY NORDLINGER

In 2006, a major American climate scientist referred to them as "two Canadians." He did not mean that very nicely. They are also known as "M&M," "M/M," and "the two M's." In the recently publicized e-mails of the Climatic Research Unit in Britain, one of those M's is referred to as "a certain Canadian." Across the CRU e-mails, both M's are treated as objects of fear and loathing. You may wonder, Who are these monsters from Canada? They are Stephen McIntyre and Ross McKitrick, and they are inconvenient to the men of the CRU: They have challenged the work of global-warming red-hots. And "Climategate," as the scandal of the CRU e-mails has been called, has embarrassed the red-hots. They are on the defensive, for the first time since global warming became a going concern. And M&M are looking pretty good. McKitrick says that Climategate has brought "a loss of innocence": about how the major climate scientists operate, about their devotion to scientific truth.

The Climatic Research Unit, ensconced at the University of East Anglia, feeds the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, an arm of the United Nations. The IPCC is considered the ultimate authority on global warming (for better or worse). In 2001, the IPCC's report featured a killer graphic: It was a graph, in fact, claiming to show the global temperature for the past millennium. From the year 1000 to about 1900, the line was relatively flat; then, from 1900 to 2000, there was a very sharp upswing. The graph looked like a hockey stick, and came to be known as just that: the "hockey-stick graph." It was the work of a team headed by Michael Mann, then of the University of Virginia, now of Pennsylvania State University. These men are allied with the CRU. Such scientists are known, collectively and cozily, as "the climate community."

The graph in question was not only a hockey stick, but a smoking gun, as people saw it: proof positive of man-made global warming. The stick went around the world, impressing and alarming people in all corners. It was featured in endless government reports, on newscasts, on posters. Al Gore used it in his Oscar-winning film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. The hockey stick became an icon, a symbol of global warming, along with the polar bear stranded on an ice floe. And the symbol was accompanied by a "soundbite," as Stephen McIntyre says—a bite taken from the IPCC report: "It is . . . likely that, in the Northern Hemisphere, the 1990s was the warmest decade and 1998 the warmest year" during the past thousand years. Nineteen ninety-eight as the warmest year: That, along with the hockey blade—the graph's sharp upswing—concentrated the mind.

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In due course, Al Gore and the IPCC won the Nobel Peace Prize, "for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change," said the committee, "and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change." Man-made global warming became accepted by almost all right-thinkers. To dispute it was to dispute the roundness of the earth, or its perpetual trek around the sun. The science was settled; there was to be no more discussion.

In truth, the science was not quite settled. The hockey stick had been called into grave question by those two inconvenient Canadians. When McIntyre first saw the graph, his curiosity was piqued. He had spent his career in mineral exploration, and had witnessed his share of spectacular claims. Dot-com rackets would forecast big profits, using hockey sticks. Most of the time, the forecasts proved bogus. It was necessary to examine the raw data behind a hockey stick. McIntyre had never even heard of the IPCC—how many of us had?—but he was determined to look into its stick. And he was astonished to discover something: No one had challenged that stick, had put it to the test. Was the world to accept the IPCC's claims about global warming, and alter its economies accordingly, without due diligence?

McIntyre would perform this due diligence himself—and the mineral-exploration man had some skills: He had math in his background, having studied the subject at the University of Toronto. He was offered Ph.D. scholarships in mathematical economics by Harvard and MIT. One of those offers came personally from Paul Samuelson, the late MIT economist. But McIntyre went a different route, accepting a Commonwealth Scholarship to Oxford, where he studied philosophy, politics, and economics. He overlapped with Bill Clinton, possibly even played rugby against him, he says. And he has long liked to explore intellectual byways. When he was interested in archeology, he taught himself "a bit of Assyrian cuneiform," as he puts it, and also taught himself "a bit of German," for the purpose of reading relevant articles in that language. This kind of activity may not be commonplace—but "there are no rules against it," as he notes.

In 2003, he linked up with Ross McKitrick, an economist at the University of Guelph, west of Toronto. McKitrick had co-authored a book called "Taken by Storm: The Troubled Science, Policy and Politics of Global Warming." Together, the two M's formed a kind of Team B, doing a rigorous check or audit of the "A" team's work. McKitrick points out that this is perfectly normal, even mandatory, in business—in the engineering fields, for example. You don't attempt to put a new plane in the air, or a new space shuttle, without a serious Team B—or C or D—effort. Shouldn't the U.N.'s climate panel have the soundest information possible, before spooking the world with a hockey stick? Shouldn't the world's governments be on the soundest footing possible before spending billions and upsetting their arrangements?

Team A was not especially grateful for M&M's work, to put it mildly. They resented the Canadians as amateurs and interlopers and spoilers. They were not inclined to share data, or discuss theories, or debate. They circled the wagons tightly and hotly. A referee for *Nature* magazine said, "I am particularly unimpressed by [this team's] style of 'shouting louder and longer so they must be right.'" In one of those publicized e-mails, a CRU scientist had this to say about a member of the team: "His air of papal infallibility is really quite nauseating at times." Many others, over the decade, have suffered the same nausea.

Along the way, M&M attracted some support. When they submitted a paper to *Geophysical Research Letters*, a referee told the journal, "I urge you not to shy away from this paper because of its potential controversy. The whole field of global warming is currently suffering from the fact that it has become politicized. Science really depends for its success on an open dialogue." *GRL* published the paper ("Hockey Sticks, Principal Components, and Spurious Significance"). A Dutch journal, *Natuurwetenschap & Techniek*, was originally skeptical of M&M, thinking they needed a dismissal. On investigation, however, *N&T* wound up respectful and supportive. In 2005, Congress asked the National Academy of Sciences to look into the controversy. Once the report was issued, both sides claimed victory. M&M said that the NAS had confirmed them, in all substantive points—but that they had lost the "spin war," which is to say, the war for media (and therefore public) support. Another panel, headed by the statistician Edward Wegman, had a look: and came down very hard on the hockey-stickers, or "hockey team," as they are sometimes called. Michael Mann, the team leader, issued a statement saying that the Wegman panel "simply uncritically parrots claims by two Canadians (an economist and an oil industry consultant)." (Actually, McIntyre is in minerals, but "oil" sounds worse.)

The economist and the consultant have persevered, despite slights and snubs. At one point, in response to a data request, a member of the hockey team said to McIntyre, "The climate community has moved on—so should you." This is quite typical, says the other M, McKitrick. "When you point to a study of theirs that is flawed, they say, 'We've moved on,' or appeal to some nebulous big picture. They say, 'Okay, this one study may be flawed, but that really doesn't matter, because we have all this other evidence.'" And on it goes. Some of the battling is waged on two prominent websites. Mann launched RealClimate.org—"Climate science from climate scientists"—which dumped heavily on M&M. In response, McIntyre launched ClimateAudit.org.

In mid-November 2009 came that explosion in the "climate community," and in the world at large: the CRU e-mails, Climategate. Someone—either a computer hacker or a disgruntled, whistleblowing insider—made available more than a thousand e-mails, from the chieftains of climatology. And those e-mails reveal a tawdry world of stonewalling, dissembling, covering up, scheming, defaming, and unprofessionalism at large. They show a determination to present one claim, no matter what: and that claim is man-made global warming, requiring dramatic global action. Honest global-warming believers and activists are shaken by what the e-mails reveal; others manage to glide on.

In an article for *The Weekly Standard*, Steven F. Hayward pointed out the following: "After 2003 the CRU crew became obsessed with McIntyre above all others"—above all other critics. "He appears in 105 of the emails by name (in some others, he's referred to as 'a certain Canadian'), usually with a tone of resentment and contempt." The head of the CRU, Phil

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Jones, wrote to Michael Mann, "Don't leave stuff lying around on ftp sites [File Transfer Protocol sites]—you never know who is trawling them. The two MMs [*sic*] have been after the CRU station data for years. If they ever hear there is a Freedom of Information Act now in the UK, I think I'll delete the file rather than send to anyone." That is just a flavor of these e-mail communications.

McIntyre says that his first reaction to the e-mails was "one of exhaustion, not one of satisfaction." He did not feel any sort of vindication or triumph. He had been through a lot, to challenge the hockey stick, to get a fair hearing. And, "at some level, you should be able to discuss statistical issues without being attacked personally. Even the simplest point seems to have occasioned tremendous ground warfare, with people being reluctant to concede anything." McIntyre adds that he is old enough—has had "enough ups and downs" in life—not to be too affected, one way or the other. And "I didn't take any particular satisfaction in seeing these guys run into trouble." The second M, McKitrick, says that his first reaction was, "Nothing here surprises me"—because he had been working in this field for so long. But the e-mails were eye-opening to journalists, he says, some of whom were "shocked." "They've been reporting the standard global-warming line for years, and I've learned in conversations with them that they had no idea that this group of scientists acted this way." Hence, the "loss of innocence." McKitrick says that Climategate "pried the lid off the process behind the IPCC reports and what goes on in journals, and forced people to realize that this is not a pure, rarefied search for truth" but "a very partisan and distorted process." Reporters, he says, are more respectful to him now. Before, it was basically, "Why don't you believe what all the world's scientists are saying?" Now they are humbler, asking more intelligent questions.

McKitrick is not particularly worried about being on the minority side in the global-warming debate. For one thing, he says, he has "the privilege of being a tenured professor at a university." And, as an economist, he has other fish to fry than global warming. But also, is his side really the minority one? McKitrick says that there are plenty of scientists and other well-informed people who are skeptical of the big IPCC claims. "I'm convinced that the numbers on our side, and the credentials on our side, are just as impressive as on the other side." The problem is that the global-warming red-hots have the funding, the influence, and the media. They also tend to be in control of the professional societies and journals. They can claim to represent thousands and thousands of scientists. But are their pronouncements ever put to a vote of those multitudes of scientists? McKitrick makes a further point: Many scientists, in many disciplines or subdisciplines, have a finger in the climate-change pie. They tend to say, "In my own particular field"—be it sea ice or solar physics or what have you—"I don't really see evidence for global warming. But I of course accept the consensus view." This calls to mind one of (Robert) Conquest's Laws: "Everyone is a conservative in his own field of expertise."

Some are with M&M, where the hockey stick and other points are concerned, but keep mum, so as not to bring trouble on themselves. "Government scientists are often in that position," says McKitrick. "They have to keep their mouth shut." McIntyre recalls attending a conference of the American Geophysical Union. He says that "two of the more eminent young scientists" told him of their admiration for his work. They said that, as far as they were concerned, he and McKitrick had smashed the hockey stick. But they were not prepared to go public.

Politics is never far from climate science, and we may ask about the Canadians' politics. Are they right-wingers? McKitrick, in addition to being an econ prof at Guelph, is a senior fellow (unpaid) of the Fraser Institute, which is a free-market think tank. Some of his opponents like to make something of this. McKitrick says that, when they argue on any grounds other than substantive ones, they are conceding defeat. It is "their way of crying uncle." As for McIntyre, he says that the only political donations he has made in the past 20 years have been to "an extremely left-wing municipal councilor in Toronto, who's a friend of my wife's." He does not allow any political discussion at his blog. And he points out that "I live in downtown Toronto, which is a liberal city. I am not a red-meat-eating Midwestern Republican." (Not that there's anything wrong with that, surely.) "I'm the same age and generation as Bill Clinton. I admire him."

Have the M's had any fun in this debate, as Davids taking on Goliaths? McKitrick says no, not really. "I wouldn't ever choose this as a hobby or pastime. There has been a lot of stress." He doesn't take any pleasure in causing an intellectual opponent embarrassment. There is, in fact, a hint of weariness about him, of someone who just wishes that science could be discussed dispassionately, and conclusions arrived at civilly. McIntyre has the same wish, as we have seen. But he has a greater liking for combat. "I wouldn't do what I'm doing if I didn't like it," he says. He has sacrificed a good deal of time and money to pursue the global-warming question: "I used to make money." In recent years, not so much. But he forges ahead "because I'm interested" and because he considers his work a kind of public service.

McIntyre is loath to make any big claims about global warming. "I'm saying that they can't know what they claim to know," about a thousand years of temperature history. And the "they" refers to the IPCC/CRU crowd. Someone may come along with fresh data that make a hockey stick, says McIntyre—a right and defensible hockey stick. But, according to him, that has not happened. His partner, McKitrick, says that "you've got a range of data sets of varying levels of quality." And the best data sets indicate the least amount of warming. He is for keeping an eye on the global temperature, and making adjustments in policy when needed—adjustments based on solid information and not merely model predictions.

The M's are in a great tradition of scientific inquiry and enterprise. They saw a major claim, which was to shake up the world. And they were skeptical of this claim, or, at a minimum, curious. They went ahead and did some testing. And they have shaken up the world a bit themselves. Science is no respecter of persons. Whether you are a High Priest in the Church of Climatology or a head-scratching Canuck, the question is, Can you make it add up? And while science may be no respecter of persons, the two Canadians, in the wake of Climategate, are getting some new respect. **NR**

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Thoughts of REVOLUTION

The strange cachet of a usually miserable phenomenon

BY ANTHONY DANIELS

Will the second revolution in Iran, if there is one, be any better than the first? How often, in fact, do revolutions increase the sum of human happiness?

Thirty years after the French Revolution, Coleridge, recorded in his *Table Talk*, said: "We are not yet aware of the consequences of that event. We are too near it." A hundred and fifty years later, Chou En-lai, when asked what he thought the effects of the French Revolution had been, famously replied that it was too soon to tell.

The effects of every great event or process are constantly reevaluated, and there is no final or definitive interpretation of them; it is always too soon to tell, for the chain of consequences never comes to an end, and our perspective tends to alter according to our current preoccupations. Recently I bought a book in France, *Le livre noir de la révolution française*, that attempts to do for the foundation of the French Republic what *Le livre noir du communisme* did for Communism: that is to say, to leave it without a shred of legitimacy because of its sheer murderousness. It need hardly be said that this interpretation has not gone entirely unchallenged, but it has at least thrown a stone into the calm pond of official self-congratulation.

If the interpretation of a revolution as long ago as the French is still contentious, how are we to interpret the phenomenon of revolution as a whole? Is it, indeed, a useful category at all, or has it been too much diluted? People are now inclined to apply the word to changes, themselves not necessarily all that radical, in every aspect of life, from philosophy to fashion.

But that is precisely the interest of the word: its cachet, its generally positive connotation. To say of a scientist that he brought about a revolution in our understanding of something is to praise him more highly than merely to say that he added greatly to our knowledge of that same thing. *Vive la révolution!*

If I were to say that this is indeed strange, because revolution has mainly brought about disaster, or at any rate more disaster than benefit to humanity, I might be asked from whose point of view I speak. I can reply only: From my own, speaking on behalf of humanity as I see it, according to my own scale of values; others might not share my values, and in any case my knowledge might be highly deficient.

By far the most successful revolution in history—indeed, one of the very few successful revolutions as measured by the subsequent progress and contentment of the population—was the American, possibly for two reasons: It grew out of a political tradition of liberty, and the despotism that it opposed was, by the standard of world despotisms, a mild one. Even so, it was not immaculate: The question that Doctor Johnson asked at the time, how is it that the loudest yelps for liberty are to be heard from the drivers of Negroes, did not emerge from the mouth of a tenured radical, but was rather a question that plagued the country for many years to come. All the same, few great events in history have resulted so unequivocally in benefit for large numbers of people, certainly not most revolutions.

In my time, I have traveled through quite a few lands with a revolutionary history, or where a recent revolution, real or imagined, has been extolled, and the list is not altogether encouraging: Haiti, Congo, Albania, North Korea, Cuba, Ethiopia, Russia, Zimbabwe, and Somalia, to name but a few. Between them, they clock up many millions dead, and hundreds of years of ferocious dictatorship or worse, and every conceivable assault on liberty.

As an example, let us take Haiti, where the terrible earthquake is like the apotheosis of the country's history, its effects so much worse because for nearly 200 years Haiti has accumulated poverty as other countries have accumulated wealth. No decent person, I think, can be unmoved by the story of the only successful slave revolt in history, or by the reasons for it. The leaders of the revolution were most remarkable men, and many of them were truly admirable. If ever a revolution was justified, the Haitian one was.

But that, alas, is not quite the same thing as saying that its results were beneficial. If only it were the same thing, how much easier the art and science of politics would be! For the history of Haiti ever since its revolution, at least insofar as history is composed of politics and economics, has been one of almost continuous man-made disaster, or man-assisted natural disaster.

Of course, to say that a revolution has been disastrous in its effects is implicitly to indulge in counterfactual thinking: It implies some kind of estimate of what might have happened without it.

In the case of Haiti, continuing as a French colony, the slaves would have been emancipated in 1848, as everywhere else in French possessions. Haiti by now would be a *département d'outre-mer* of France, that is to say the polite fiction would be entertained that it was just the same as, say, la Drôme or Haute-Savoie, and it would have received massive subsidies from the French state to encourage at least the majority of the population to stay put. The buildings would be far more solid than they are, less liable to total collapse in an earthquake. One of the remote consequences of the Haitian revolution might therefore have been many more deaths after the recent earthquake than would otherwise have happened.

If only the heroes of the Haitian revolution could have hung on for another 40 or 50 years, how different would have been the standard of living of their descendants, and how much better placed the country to withstand natural disaster! But, of course, one cannot blame them: History is lived forwards, not backwards, and no one can see the long-term unintended consequences of his acts.

Strangely enough, however, the word "revolution" retained its prestige in Haiti so successfully that Dr. Duvalier availed himself of it. His tenebrous regime was revolutionary, at least in its own estimate; and in the sense that it brought about profound changes, perhaps this was just. The man one of whose early publications was a study of the use of tetracycline in the elimination of yaws, conducted under the auspices of the Rockefeller Institute, and one

Mr. Daniels is the author of Utopias Elsewhere *and other books.*

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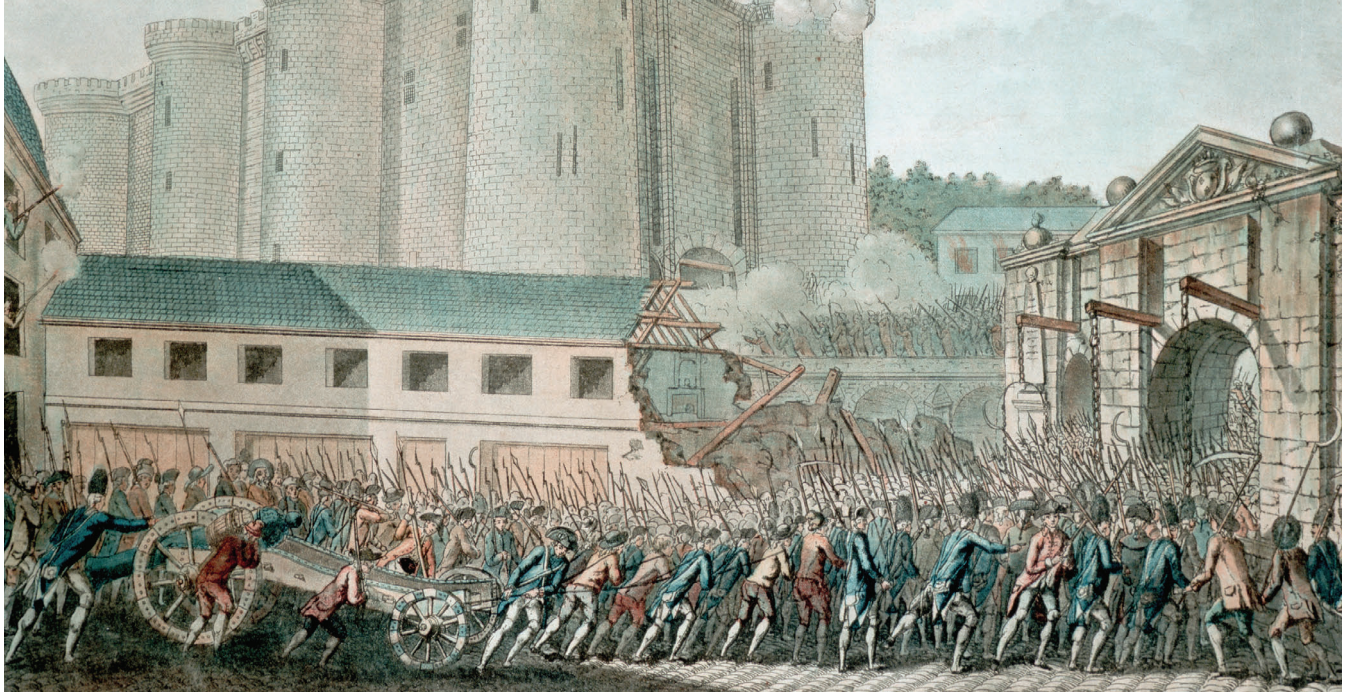

PRISE DE LA BASTILLE: GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS

of whose books was extolled in a postface by a courtier as his *Mein Kampf* (intended as a compliment), always claimed legitimacy by means of the word "revolution." Even stranger, the word retained its positive connotations long after the good doctor's death.

EVERYWHERE I went, any prominence of the word "revolution" did not seem to augur very well for the population. I remember a time when it was fashionable among intellectuals in the West to argue that anti-colonial revolutions in Africa, such as those in Algeria and the Lusophone countries, would lead to "real" independence as against the phony independence of the other African states, revolution being necessary to shake up the apolitical torpor of the population and liberate it from its mind-forg'd manacles. It would be interesting one day to write a history of this madness.

If you had to have a revolution at all, it was obviously best to have a bogus one, such as that in Zaire under the rule of the late Mobutu Sese Seko. At the time, I did not appreciate him at his true worth. His "revolution" consisted of forbidding neckties and making everyone abandon his European first name in the cause of African authenticity. It otherwise largely left people untouched: It had no choice in the matter, for it was so inefficient that the transport network virtually ceased to exist. Where it did exist, the revolution set up military checkpoints, but these were not much to be feared. I remember going through one in a truck without stopping, sending the soldiers flying in all directions. I asked the driver whether this was not dangerous; would the soldiers not fire at us?

"Oh no, *monsieur*, they've sold all their bullets long ago."

That's the kind of African revolution I learned to like (relatively speaking), the bogus one that sells its bullets. It turned out, in the event, that the driver was absolutely right. When it came to fighting opponents with real weapons, the revolution was utterly defenseless. Needless to say, the real thing has been incomparably worse: millions dead, and millions of refugees.

My experiences of Latin American revolutionary movements also led me to conclude that people rarely take to violence for the sake of freedom. Power is much more attractive to them than freedom, which necessitates the difficult discipline of toleration; liberation movements, so called, fight for the freedom to boss other people about because they know what is right for them. They are about the replacement of one elite by another, not infrequently worse because even more self-righteous.

This is nothing like an iron law of politics, however: not like the iron law of oligarchy expounded by Robert Michels, say. The violent downfall or overthrow of regimes can sometimes lead to an increase in liberty, even where such was not the real intention of the leaders. The prime example of this is Romania. Having visited that country in the last days of Ceausescu, when it seemed that he and his Lady Macbeth would preside over it forever, I rejoiced when he was overthrown (and, I am ashamed to say, I briefly rejoiced also that he had been shot after the briefest of trials by a kangaroo court on charges some of which were manifestly untrue). What seemed like a revolution came then to appear like a putsch, an attempt by one faction of the *ancien régime* to preserve that regime. But though the putsch was intended as such, it really was a revolution in its effects; for a regime such as Ceausescu's is like an egg, it is either whole or it is broken, and once broken it cannot be made into a whole egg again. Although the new governments in the first years after the downfall of Ceausescu managed the difficult feat of making the economy yet worse for many, perhaps most, people, from the point of view of freedom they represented an improvement. And, as Tocqueville said, woe betide him who seeks in freedom anything other than freedom itself.

All in all, I am skeptical of the prospects before Iran. The Iranian revolution of 1979 enjoyed support not because it promised freedom, at least in any form that we know it. And even if the current government committed electoral fraud, it was not on such a massive scale as to imply a population near-unanimously in favor of the government's overthrow, let alone its violent overthrow, or a regime that commands absolutely no popular support. It is far from certain that a regime of the kind that the opposition would like to install would enjoy majority support, being based as it would be on an unrepresentative educated elite, in which case the possibilities for extremely violent conflict would be strong. It is very rare in history that freedom has emerged from such violence, and rarer still in countries like Iran; those who claim to fight for freedom have often been all too ready to resort to extreme force to defend their own power. I hope that I am wrong. **NR**

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The Long View

BY ROB LONG

From the Wednesday Inbox

TO: jstevens@wilmercutlerllc.com
FROM: pwilliamson@manattphelpsllc.com
SUBJ: our clients

Dear Joe:

I just got an e-mail from my client. He has been watching the Massachusetts Senate returns closely—he says it reminds him a lot of what happened to him in 1994, when he was president. As you know he remains one of the smartest political minds around. He had a thought he'd like to run by your client, whenever she gets the time—know she's busy with all of this Haiti stuff and other DepState business.

Let me top-line you: My client believes that with what's happened in Mass and what's on the horizon in the midterms, 2012 offers an opportunity for your client. Enough said. Let's talk.

Could you please circle back with me and maybe we can set a time?

Paul

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TO: pwilliamson@manattphelpsllc.com
FROM: jstevens@wilmercutlerllc.com
SUBJ: RE: our clients

Paul:

As you know, my client is very busy with her duties as Secretary of State. And she pointed out, when I called her, that your client is also supposed to be pretty busy with the Haiti rescue effort. Can't this wait?

Joe

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TO: jstevens@wilmercutlerllc.com
FROM: pwilliamson@manattphelpsllc.com
SUBJ: RE: RE: our clients

Joe:

Look, I think that when a client with the stature and the political savvy of mine has an idea to run by your client, his legally enfranchised life partner, it's not too much to ask for a conference call among the parties to discuss it. I also think that this kind of interaction is covered by our most recent partnership agreement between the parties, in which it's clearly stated and agreed to that each party has the right to ask for a discussion/conversation with reasonable time-frame notice.

And honestly, this is a complex deal—involving positioning for the midterms and a whole lot of other moving parts. Sooner the better.

Paul

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TO: pwilliamson@manattphelpsllc.com
FROM: jstevens@wilmercutlerllc.com
SUBJ: RE: RE: RE: our clients

Paul:

For the record, my client states that she's perfectly happy with her current position as Secretary of State. And of course as such she owes the highest allegiance to the current president of the United States.

That said, she's intrigued by your client's notion, and would be open to a discussion with him about the details. The hard part, according to her, is the timing. What does your client suggest?

Can we schedule a pre-call between the two of us, to discuss the parameters of the subsequent call between our clients? As you know, despite their long and happy marriage, our clients prefer to communicate entirely via legal counsel, and so any direct conversations between them need careful planning.

Joe

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TO: jstevens@wilmercutlerllc.com
FROM: pwilliamson@manattphelpsllc.com
SUBJ: RE: RE: RE: RE: our clients

Joe:

Let's talk Thursday morning. I agree that this one-on-one conversation needs planning on our part. No one wants a repeat of Christmas Dinner '08.

Basically, as he envisions it, the sequence might go something like this: Near the end of '10—after the midterms—your client resigns from State—we'll come up with something, "record of accomplishment" etc. etc. and "looking forward to new horizons and new challenges"—and by April of '11 we start the drumbeat of a primary challenge. She demurs. My client will be the lightning rod here, giving vaguely worded denials to the press, etc. That's phase one. After a summer vacation at Squam Lake, in New Hampshire (have the summer house picked out already, you can see it online at newhampshirelakehousesummerrental.com), she announces she's in on Labor Day. My client expresses surprise, etc. etc. Off to the races.

Thoughts?

Paul

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TO: pwilliamson@manattphelpsllc.com
FROM: jstevens@wilmercutlerllc.com
SUBJ: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: our clients

Paul:

How do we handle the race angle? Running against the first black president? Disloyalty, etc.????

Joe

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TO: jstevens@wilmercutlerllc.com
FROM: pwilliamson@manattphelpsllc.com
SUBJ: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: our clients

Joe:

It's not racist if you vote for a woman. It's pro-woman. That's how Sid thinks we can spin it.

Paul

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TO: pwilliamson@manattphelpsllc.com
FROM: jstevens@wilmercutlerllc.com
SUBJ: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: our clients

Paul:

Love it. It's Conan/Leno, but with POTUS. Took a chance on a young exciting face, didn't work out, now we're unwinding the position and going back to tried and true. I think it's magic, seriously. And off the record, my client likes it a lot too. In fact, she'd love to call her husband directly to talk this over. Please send me his phone number, and I'll get it to her ASAP.

Joe

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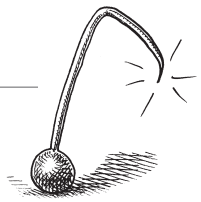

The Bent Pin

BY FLORENCE KING

Apocalypse, Please

I HAVE made no New Year's Resolutions because I spent the first week of January watching specials about the end of the world due to take place on Dec. 21, 2012. Since my 74th birthday also fell during this week, I would ask those of you who regularly tell me that you pray for me to keep up the good work. Ask not for me to be spared, just that I will still be around to see it happen, because for a misanthrope it's a consummation not to be missed.

It's too soon to tell whether the next human race that replaces us in some 60 million years will call us the Gedds or the Lypses. Their archeologists will find shards of videotape cans so marked and eventually put together "Armageddon" and "Apocalypse," but they will have to be really high-tech to restore what I saw with a mere flick of the remote. It was Nostradamus Meets the Mayans all the way, one channel after another, each with a solemn voiceover saying, "Not if, but when."

The History Channel did another in their *Life After People* series but they've been airing these for some time, and they're tame compared to the new line-up. They carefully point out that they don't claim to know why people disappeared, only that they are all gone, and then show a lot of grass and weeds growing on skyscrapers, bridges, and other engineering miracles until, untended, they eventually collapse. The underlying message is that we need people, which is why the only thing I liked about the series was its title.

Then came the New Year's Revelations. We got a two-hour "factualized" fictional account of a family—mom, dad, and teenage son—who survive a pandemic disease that kills most but not all Americans. We follow their experiences from the initial stages of coping, on through rage, hysteria, emotional numbness, paranoia, hunger, thirst, and so on, supplemented by explanatory commentaries from doctors, sociologists, and assorted experts. Two of their experiences are real sucker punches. One is New Year's Revulsions, when they find the toilet won't flush and the shower goes dry, guaranteed to trigger our special American terror of smelling bad built up by decades of deodorant and air-freshener commercials. The other is New Year's Restitutions, in which the menacing talk we have heard of late about "taking back" our communities is presented as natural, legal, and inevitable when an armed gang, the remnants of a town, shoot anybody they feel like shooting to keep out looters.

The factual fiction ends anticlimactically when the dad scratches his hand while repairing something and, lacking antibiotics, dies of an infection. There's a way to cure that. Just switch to the Discovery Channel, where professional survivor Bear Grylls is building a raft to escape the Everglades. He, too, scratches his hand, and he, too, lacks antibiotics, so he pees on his hand because the ammonia—or something—in urine has antiseptic properties.

Florence King can be reached at P.O. Box 7113, Fredericksburg, VA 22404.

Someone certain to scratch his hand is the star of the History Channel's new show, *Apocalypse Man*. He's trapped in a big city after a disaster has killed off most everyone else, and he can figure out a good use for every piece of rusty junk he finds. An old bicycle pump? He uses it to siphon off gasoline. Grappling hooks? He can swing from roof to roof instead of walking on streets where other survivors can attack him and take his bicycle pump. A flashlight? He advises us not to carry it down at the hip in the old civilized way, but up at the shoulder so you can slam it into the face of someone trying to take it from you.

What he really needs is a map of the city grids so he can travel by sewer and come up under the manhole of the street he wants. He knows just where to find it, too—and why. "You probably didn't have a library card before," he says, "but the public library has just what you need." Then, in a delicious throwaway line, adds: "In Hurricane Katrina, the library was the only place that wasn't looted." He finds his grid map and navigates the sewers without saying a word about Jean Valjean.

Where is all this heading? Try New Year's Remunerations. If you remember the backyard bomb shelters of the '50s, you know "enterpernoors" are going to make a lot of money from it, just as they have from identity-theft panic. Somebody will market a flashlight with flip-up brass knuckles, or for the kids, grappling hooks. This will be a boon for parents fed up with permissiveness; if Junior gets scratched they can pee on him.

Or try New Year's Reservations. The *Titanic* centennial will be ruined. By April 1912 our definition of disaster will be so engorged that a mere collision with a mere iceberg will be nothing more than a Lypse that went blip in the night, a quaint Retro-Gedd that missed the boat.

As for the election of 2012—why bother? If real panic ensues a dictator could take power, but who? Obama seems consumed with what your average inner-city manchild calls "acting white," but while Harry Reid might take comfort from this, a panicked populace chanting "Do something!" will yearn for the powerful specter of the Angry Black Man, if only to find some *there* there.

Who else? The mainstream Right is full of soothe-sayers who will try to shrug off the doomsday prediction and tamp down the panic with sideways grins and constant reassurances that "I'm a glass-is-half-full kinda guy." The most likely candidate for president-dictator is one of the oleaginous power-preachers on the radical Right who would rather count Remnants than votes. If he could convince enough people that they will be among the Saved, he would win by the biggest landslide, as well as the lowest voter turn-out, in our history.

So here we are with 35 months to go, waiting for the other shoe to drop. If it does, it won't really matter because we have fulfilled our New Year's Reparations and elected our first black president. Our work is done. Now we can belong to the ages. **NR**

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Ten Great Conservative Novels

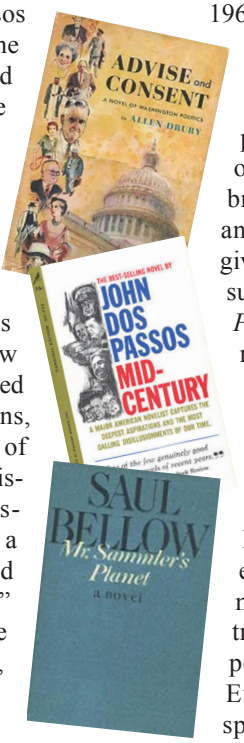
A few months ago, a professor e-mailed with a simple question: What are the great conservative novels? He was preparing a course on the history of American conservatism and wanted to include some fiction on his syllabus. I proposed a few titles, but his question lingered in my mind. So I asked readers of National Review Online for their suggestions. I also canvassed several experts on American literature. Hundreds of ideas poured in. Here is the result: a list of ten great conservative novels, all written by Americans since the founding of the conservative movement in the 1950s. Lists such as this are always (and ideally) debatable. Yet these choices represent something of a rough consensus. Feel free to add them to your own reading syllabus.

—John J. Miller

1. ***Advise and Consent*, by Allen Drury (1959):** "It may be a long time before a better [novel about Washington] comes along," noted *Saturday Review* on the publication of *Advise and Consent*. The first work of fiction by veteran reporter Allen Drury won a Pulitzer, stayed on the bestseller lists for nearly two years, and became a well-regarded movie starring Henry Fonda and Charles Laughton. The book was loosely based on the case of Alger Hiss, and it sizzles with issues of loyalty and security. Half a century since its first publication, *Advise and Consent* still provides a penetrating look at Washington's never-ending clash between ambition and integrity. The strength of the book is that even though it's a political novel about a confirmation battle between the executive branch and powerful senators, it doesn't wear politics on its sleeve. Instead, Drury shares the conservative's preference for studying people, with their vices and virtues, before their stated ideologies. His novel exhibits a firm appreciation for the checks and balances at the heart of the American constitutional order as well as a sophisticated view of human nature. Even now, *Advise and Consent* remains a page-turning thriller that both describes and celebrates the obfuscations, oratorical mannerisms, and etiquette that are designed quite deliberately as speed bumps in the paths of the statist behemoth. That is just one reason it remains a book that every student of the U.S. Senate should read—as well as any student of American literature.

—Roger Kaplan is a writer in Washington, D.C.

2. ***Midcentury*, by John Dos Passos (1961):** *Midcentury* is more than just a great conservative novel. It's one of the undiscovered classics in 20th-century literature. Dos Passos returns to the unique style he developed in his acclaimed *U.S.A.* trilogy, where multiple stories intersect with real-life headlines and portraits of the rich and powerful. His themes are the great issues of the 1950s: the Cold War and the aftereffects of the New Deal. *Midcentury* uses both fiction and history to show how Communists and organized crime corrupted labor unions, when they were at the peak of their power. The book also displays cultural foresight, especially in its portrait of a sneering James Dean titled "The Sinister Adolescents." Dos Passos anticipates the emerging counterculture, which he interprets (controversially, but plausibly) in light of the subversion and loss of traditional institutions, as the "Greatest Generation" failed to match its bravery overseas with the efforts necessary to take on domestic adversaries. ("Why not resentful? There's more to life; the kids knew it. Their fathers won a war but weren't men enough to keep the peace, they let the politicians and pundits wheedle them into defeat; they let the goons pilfer their paychecks, too busy watching TV to resent oppression.") *Midcentury* is even more remarkable because Dos Passos made his literary reputation as a socialist and is perhaps the only first-rate novelist to make a conscious journey from Left to Right over the course of his career. Never shrill, *Midcentury* bristles with insight and the hard-won wisdom of an ex-leftist who knows his history.



—Larry Kaufmann, an economic consultant in Madison, Wis., contributes to YeahRightBlog.com.

3. ***Mr. Sammler's Planet*, by Saul Bellow (1970):** If Saul Bellow's 1970 novel, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, was not written for the sake of conservatism, it was widely read as a conservative manifesto. Set at the end of the dispiriting 1960s in a New York City that has descended into moral anarchy, it chronicles America's cultural decadence. Young people thrill to the humiliation of the elderly, criminals celebrate their own righteousness, and the sexual revolution has given birth to a base nihilism. Via such depictions, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* is a novel of decay and rot. Moreover, Bellow seems to say, the American Left is no passive bystander but an active vehicle of decline. Artur Sammler, the titular character, is a Polish Jewish Holocaust survivor and an erstwhile liberal optimist. The novel pivots on a shocking translation: Sammler applies a pessimism he has learned on Europe's killing fields to the spectacle of late-20th-century America. His weary wisdom lends the novel its taut intellectual drama. With Elya Gruner, the book's other hero, Bellow repudiates the littérateur's formulaic pity for respectable

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members of the bourgeoisie. Gruner's plodding commitment to family annoys his ungrateful children, lacks the sanction of cultural fashion, and forms an ideal to which Gruner himself does not entirely live up. Yet, in the novel, it also enables a small island of decency and goodness. Bellow's was a sui generis conservatism planted at the center of literary Manhattan circa 1970, a calculated provocation from a writer destined to win the Nobel Prize in 1976.

—Michael Kimmage, an assistant professor of history at Catholic University, is the author of The Conservative Turn.

4. *The Time It Never Rained*, by Elmer Kelton (1973):

To say that Elmer Kelton wrote "Westerns" is to confine him to a literary ghetto. He certainly participated in the genre and wasn't ashamed to do so. Yet his greatest book, about a terrible drought in West Texas during the 1950s, is an unheralded classic—and a profoundly conservative story about the importance of self-reliance in the face of overwhelming odds. Charlie Flagg is a cantankerous rancher who suffers during the dry spell but refuses all offers of government assistance, to the puzzlement and even consternation of his neighbors. Libertarians like to say that there's no such thing as a free lunch. Kelton has Charlie proclaim it in his own regional idiom: "There was nothin' new about that idea. It's as old as mankind . . . the hope of gettin' somethin' for nothin' or of getting more out of the pot than you put in it. Nobody's ever made it work yet. Nobody ever will." *The Time It Never Rained* overflows with this kind of homespun wisdom, but the book's real pleasure lies in its vivid characters and their inevitable conflicts. Charlie and his wife can't agree on what to have for dinner, in an ongoing battle that masks deeper fissures. Their son rejects ranch life, even though he could inherit the small operation they've built. Meanwhile, a Mexican-American boy looks to Charlie as a father figure. "I can't write about heroes seven feet tall and invincible," Kelton once said. "I write about people five feet eight and nervous."

—John J. Miller

5. *The Thanatos Syndrome*, by Walker Percy (1987):

Walker Percy was a doctor who contracted tuberculosis. Following his recuperation, he abandoned medicine for literature. He said he wanted to diagnose spiritual, not physical, malaise. His recurrent theme in books such as *The Moviegoer* and *Love in the Ruins* was that particular malady of the modern dystopia, the triumph of science over charity and humanity. A Catholic convert, Percy examined what happens to a society when it stops believing in the transcendent and relies instead on a medicalized view of the human person, whose ills can be cured through therapy and drugs. On this point, his most compellingly readable book may be *The Thanatos Syndrome*. It features Thomas More, a doctor who returns home to Louisiana after a stint in prison. It seems the good folk of the town are lacing the municipal waters with a chemical designed to eliminate bad conduct, such as aggression, addiction, and other dangerous behaviors. More resists this effort because the exercise of choice and free will makes us human. Trying to erase our flaws—even through the use of scientific methods made possible by our human intelligence—reduces us to beasts, a devolution vividly recounted through characters who revert to being rutting, language-lost animals. The elimination of undesirable characteristics leads, inexorably in Percy's view, to the destruction of "unwanted" persons. Scientific judgment, without an infusion of charity, results in decisions that are literally nonhuman. It was a compelling story in the 1980s, and—in an age of destructive embryonic-stem-cell research, trait-specific abortion, and euthanasia—remains one today.

—Gerald Russello is a fellow of the Chesterton Institute at Seton Hall University and author of The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk.

6. *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, by Tom Wolfe (1987):

In many ways, the New York City of the 1980s—sprawling, crime-ridden, out of control—has passed into history. Yet Tom Wolfe's grand novel of this place and time holds up because human nature—greedy, lazy, concupiscent, and beset by status anxiety—hasn't changed a whit, nor has the tumultuous energy of the city that never sleeps. Wolfe created a huge and vivid gallery of New York types, high and low, who were fully human. (His aim was that of Dickens, to write about every level of society.) At the center is Sherman McCoy: preening, eaten by insecurity, and terrified of his wife, his mistress, his boss, and the nemesis that awaits him as punishment for an act of cowardice. And there are so many other characters who persist as recognizable types, including slothful journalists, trophy wives, career-pushing prosecutors, snobbish nannies who lord it over their less well-heeled clients—all ground through the gears of a tight and perfectly turning plot. Wolfe despised arty, introspective fiction and sought to write a panoramic, large-scale, 19th-century-style novel that would realistically portray 20th-century urban life in all its rollicking glory and sordidness. He succeeded so well that some of the turns of phrase he coined—"Masters of the Universe," "social X-rays"—are fixtures of American English more than 20 years later. Sherman McCoy will live forever as one of 20th-century America's most distinctive fictional characters, and researchers will be consulting Wolfe's book for centuries to find out what New York was—and is—really like.

—Charlotte Allen is the author of The Human Christ.

7. *Shelley's Heart*, by Charles McCarry (1995):

Charles McCarry is sometimes called a "conservative John le Carré" for his highly intelligent espionage thrillers. The difference is that le Carré presents British spymaster George Smiley and his Soviet foe Karla as moral

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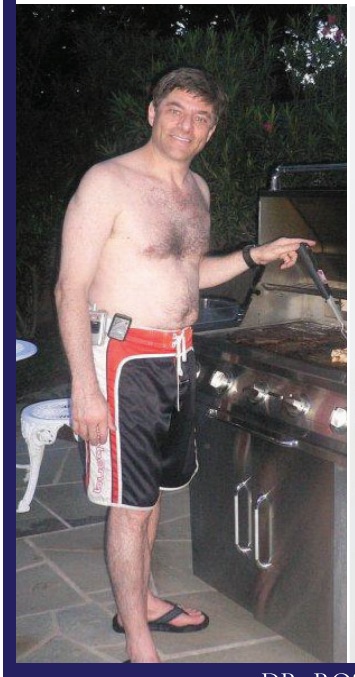

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equivalents, while McCarry believes in the superiority of Western ideals. His spy novels depict the unpleasant, even tragic, actions that are sometimes necessary to preserve those ideals. *Shelley's Heart* is a political thriller and the finest fictional account of how modern Washington works—or doesn't, as the case may be. The novel eviscerates politicians, aides, journalists, and judges as they vie for power. McCarry's depictions can be deeply cynical: A radical nominee for the Supreme Court will likely be confirmed because he has spent his professional life making sure that none of his controversial views is ever on the record. As for the supposedly free press, "All the front pages carried the same stories in the same positions under headlines that said the same thing." Thanks to environmental policies that have run amok, the streets are dark at night and the capital is infested with deer. Here is how McCarry describes a president who has made a momentous decision that he knows runs counter to the best interests of the country but may save his career and advance his political agenda: "Like most political figures of his generation who embrace progressive convictions," McCarry writes, "Lockwood had never in his adult life been anything but a politician." He "was a politician to the depths of his being, and his office was all he had." Sound familiar?

—Melanie Kirkpatrick, a former deputy editor of the Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page, is a writer in Connecticut.*

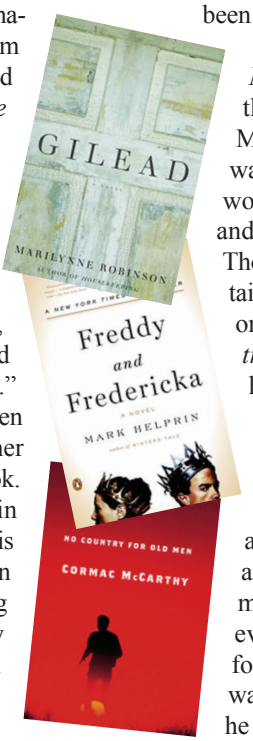
8. *Gilead*, by Marilynne Robinson (2004):

This Pulitzer Prize–winning novel is about virtue, and virtue rewarded. It takes the form of a letter from father to son, the last testament of the ailing John Ames, a fourth-generation minister in the small Iowa town of Gilead during the 1950s. He has lived according to what he calls the "obvious question": "What is the Lord asking of me in this moment, in this situation?" The answer is not always apparent, Ames finds. His is a divided heritage: between his fiery abolitionist grandfather, who fought in the Civil War, and his pacifist father. Ames faces his own stumbling block in the form of Jack Boughton, his godson and a Prodigal Son who returns seeking his godfather's blessing. Throughout the novel, Ames seeks to untangle a series of knotty moral questions: What is the relation of divine justice to earthly justice? How is that justice consistent with grace? *Gilead* grapples with these "mysteries" of human existence, even as Ames cautions that "we human beings," frail and sinful, have "so little conception of justice, and so slight a capacity for grace." The result is a book of both humility and hope, aware of our limitations, but also of the goodness of creation. "Augustine says the Lord loves each of us as an only child, and that has to be true," Ames writes. "'He will wipe the tears from all faces.' It takes nothing from the loveliness of the verse to say that is exactly what will be required." There is, indeed, balm in *Gilead*.

—Cheryl Miller is editor of Doublethink *magazine.*

9. *Freddy and Fredericka*, by Mark Helprin (2005):

As the Allies closed in on the Nazis, U.S. soldiers arrived at the door of Richard Strauss. Drawing himself up (one imagines), Strauss greeted them with, "I am Doktor Richard Strauss, composer of *Salome* and *Der Rosenkavalier*." Interesting that he should have chosen those two works, for self-identification. Under Mark Helprin's name, on the cover of his latest book, *Digital Barbarism*, we find, "Author of *Winter's Tale* and *A Soldier of the Great War*." Those are extraordinary, even great, novels. One or the other is many people's favorite book. But there are other Helprin creations to absorb. All of his novels are "conservative," in that they deal with enduring truths and how to live. They are also shot through with religion, having the quality of prayer. But at least one of those novels is conservative in even a political way. That is *Freddy and Fredericka*, a comedy. And though it is a comedy—a dazzling one—it becomes perfectly profound. Freddy and Fredericka are a prince and princess of Wales who are banished to America, where they find their true selves. Helprin writes a hymn to America, his home country—a hymn with no triteness at all. But he also sings of England as few Englishmen have. They should knight him for it. In writing about love and life—and how could the two be separated?—Helprin lifts you up. He is a rare combination of big, big literary talent and big, big humanity.



—Jay Nordlinger is an NR *senior editor.*

10. *No Country for Old Men*, by Cormac McCarthy (2005):

Some novels are not ostensibly political but nevertheless have a special appeal for conservatives, especially those in the Augustinian tradition. Such people are skeptical about plans for improvement and cynical about the morally pretentious. They think that we live in a fallen world and that natural law is a lie told by an atheist. Their favorite authors are Pascal, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, and, in our day, Cormac McCarthy, America's greatest living novelist. McCarthy's *The Road* recently has been turned into a film. A better introduction to his work may be *No Country for Old Men*, itself the subject of a superb movie. McCarthy's message is that evil walks the land, that fate rules the world, that God owes us nothing, and that His silence is unbroken. Those who accept this have a certain nobility, but redemption comes only through His grace. *No Country* is the story of a chase, of a hunter and the hunted, of a hit man and his victim, told through the prism of a sheriff, the novel's moral center. The hunter, Anton Chigurh, is an avenging angel, the agent of amoral fate in a dark world, the most frightening character you'll ever encounter. "If the rule you followed led you to this of what use was the rule?" asks Chigurh, before he pulls the trigger. The sheriff follows moral rules, but like Chigurh does not expect they'll help him in any way, which is why Chigurh permits him to live.

—F. H. Buckley is a law professor at George Mason University.

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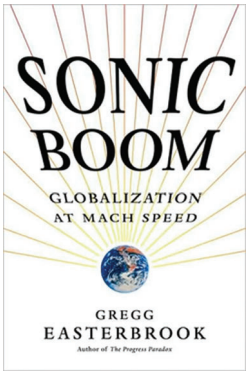
Future Imperfect

GEORGE GILDER



Sonic Boom: Globalization at Mach Speed, by Gregg Easterbrook (Random House, 272 pp., $26)

In this intriguingly contrarian rework of the Thomas Friedman "hot and flat" motif, Gregg Easterbrook asserts that venture capitalists are no better than lottery players when it comes to choosing new technology companies. He reports that leading stock analysts outperform broad market-index funds only one-third of the time. He adds that the preeminent financial pundits break into two groups—pessimists like Robert Shiller and Nouriel Roubini, who are right during downturns, and optimists like Abby Joseph Cohen of Goldman Sachs, who are right during upturns. (There are no up-and-down visionaries like Steve Forbes or Ken Fisher visible anywhere on his horizon.)

Easterbrook, a writer for *The Atlantic* and *The New Republic*, winningly acknowledges that "wonderful economists" such as leftist luminaries Lester Thurow of MIT and the late John Kenneth Galbraith (surely "wonderful writers" would be more accurate) were wrong about almost everything: Japanese industrial policy, the Soviet economy, the U.S. economy, the role of large corporations in innovation, the future of markets, pollution, socialism, you name it. Even Nobel-laureate economists, says Easterbrook, get almost no predictions right at all, beyond microeconomic minutiae, such as Paul Krugman's prize-winning mathematical gobbledygook showing that countries geographically close to one another are more likely to trade. Collectively the experts utterly failed to predict any of the major turning points in the U.S. and global economies over the last five decades.

In a stirring conclusion, Easterbrook asserts: "If it hadn't been shown a hundred times before, the financial-world events of the last two years proved that even the most powerful officials have little clue what the economy is about to do, and only a mild, limited ability to influence economic events once they commence. . . . Yet the international economy . . . was not brought down by the Cold War, or the two 1970s oil shocks, or the savings and loan debacle, or currency gyrations in Asia, or September 11. Most likely [today] it will rebound with a glittering Sonic Boom," his metaphor for creative destruction that wreaks both splendid progress and widespread anxiety.

"Many companies, institutions, or sports teams," he writes, "have a single person in charge, and that person is in a position to make a catastrophic error that brings [them] down. . . . We know from the sad chronicles of history that placing one single person in unchecked charge of a nation nearly guarantees a catastrophic result." Market economics provides "a new model of social interactions, in which no one is in charge, yet things go well"—because, as he explains, capitalism is not the dog-eat-dog Darwinian struggle of leftist mythology but essentially a cooperative system in which all players want others to succeed and provide markets for their own output. As a result, the system works without expert guidance from above. "Experts won't like [the triumph of this system]," says Easterbrook, "because their predictions will fare even more poorly than now. [But] overall, the world might be better off."

This down-with-the-experts riff is bracing stuff, raffishly dismissing pompous punditry left and right. Yet Easterbrook is no doctrinaire skeptic. In apparent contrast to all the other purveyors of defective expertise he mentions, one group commands his complete faith: the mostly government-paid authors of the consensus on climate change. So reliable are these folk that Easterbrook would have the world measure and mete out, cap and trade, every emission of carbon dioxide. Over the next 40 years, Easterbrook believes, we must invest an additional *$45 trillion* in response to the claim that the very carbon dioxide emissions that we breathe out (and plants turn into carbohydrates and oxygen that sustain our carbon-based bodies) are a threat to the planet.

It didn't have to end in this biochemical bathos. In *A Moment on the Earth*, his excellent 1995 book on environmental progress in free economies, Easterbrook himself boldly debunked the alarmist argument for human-caused global warming. At the time I began to believe that he might become a real critic of the green religion. But by 2006 Easterbrook gave in. Renouncing every glint of his previous skepticism, he produced a fatuous paper called "Case Closed: The Debate about Global Warming Is Over," in which he meekly succumbed to the political experts' "near-unanimous acceptance of the evidence of an artificial greenhouse effect."

Although otherwise-sensible people left and right allow themselves to be bowled over on this issue by devious zealots with doctorates, the fact is that there was a consensus only among leftist scientists in the government. In my circles of Ph.D.s in technology companies and in tenured academic positions, global-warming theory was already evoking rage and indignation from leading experts around the world, who pointed out that the so-called medieval climate optimum featured centuries of temperatures several degrees higher than today's. What would become a throng of some 31,000 scientists—including Fred Seitz, former president of Rockefeller University, and Fred Singer, the designer of the very satellite systems that collect the data—were already rushing to sign Caltech chemist Arthur Robinson's petition against the global warmers. Nothing of significance has happened since the 1980s and 1990s except that—entirely contrary to the warmers' sundry computer models—the increases in CO_2 have produced no further warming at all for more than a decade.

"Is the fire included?"

Mr. Gilder is a founder of the Discovery Institute, a venture capitalist, and the author of 15 books, including The Israel Test.

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Apparently unbeknownst to Easterbrook, though, a multibillion-dollar surge of politically impelled government money reoriented opportunistic scientists around the globe toward the pursuit of a new rationale for global government and socialism. I have come to believe that nearly all government science is politically twisted and unreliable. After filling out all the forms and toadying to all the bureaucratic toads necessary to obtain a grant, there is all too often little energy left to perform the research—and no inclination, if it affronts the source of the funds.

It would be gratifying if I could conclude this review by describing Easterbrook's climate blunder as an aberration with little effect on the good sense of his overall argument. But I cannot. In principle, Easterbrook is pungent and right about free markets; but in practice he comes out as reliably leftist as any Democratic senator. For all our author's vaunted skepticism toward financial punditry, he is in fact as much a pushover for any fashionable enthusiasm of the Left as the even glibber and more Panglossian Friedman in the similarly free-market but environmentally totalitarian *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*.

Without its market-crippling contradictions, *Sonic Boom* would be a cogent and even sometimes original contribution to free-market literature. But the contradictions finally overwhelm the very real insights. "You can't stop global change," he boldly asserts, *except* "climate change." Experts are always wrong *except* about the long-term weather. Venture capitalists cannot select companies any better than a lottery, *yet* companies that have been backed by venture capitalists account for 10 percent of jobs and 20 percent of GDP. Private markets are always more efficient than public mandates, *except* for health care, women's rights, education, pollution, and banking.

Easterbrook finally epitomizes what Thomas Sowell depicts as "the unconstrained vision," which is pervasive on the American Left. We can have it all—stable families plus sexual freedom; vast new mandated spending and regulation of health care and energy plus less debt and freer markets and more entrepreneurship. Like most liberals, Easterbrook has no sense of the facts of life and its limits. In the end the recommendations of *Sonic Boom* would harvest all the anxiety that he predicts, but few of the benefits. **NR**

Depth of Vision

KELLY JANE TORRANCE

"I saw a Rohmer film once," Gene Hackman's character in *Night Moves* famously declared. "It was kind of like watching paint dry."

Those two lines, in a movie directed by the acclaimed Arthur Penn, might have dissuaded an entire generation of film fans from investigating the work of Eric Rohmer. It's too bad. When Rohmer died on January 11 in Paris, at age 89, the world lost the man who might have been its greatest living director.

In many ways, he was a stereotypically French filmmaker: His elegant films are filled with wine drinking and cigarette smoking in moody cafés and cramped apartments. As Hackman's character noticed, Rohmer's characters don't seem to do much; no Protestant work ethic keeps them from philosophizing late into the night. Sometimes they don't even do so much as talk—a longish scene in *Full Moon in Paris* (1984) simply shows modish men and women dancing to mediocre French pop in a 1980s nightclub.

But, despite the familiar European-art-film elements, Rohmer was a filmmaker unlike any other. In the 1950s, before the French New Wave Rohmer helped launch had even been conceived, he told fellow critic and would-be director Jacques Rivette that there were two novelists every filmmaker must read: Honoré de Balzac and Fyodor Dostoevsky. You won't find many other French directors—let alone directors, period—closely studying these two giants. But a fondness for one of literature's founding realists, and for its greatest psychologist and moralist, sums up Rohmer's approach to his art.

Don't let these influences—or the fact that Rohmer was also a schoolteacher, a novelist, and a critic—lead you to think he's simply a highbrow writer who set his words to celluloid. In fact, a lot goes on in Rohmer's films, though much of the drama is internal. Every one of his movies contains action of the highest type: A character (usually a man) is faced with temptation and must make a moral decision. That decision, though pondered with the right amount of angst, might seem to be a momentary one, but it turns out to be momentous. A yes or a no can damn a man for eternity.

Rohmer was almost forced to become a success. From 1957 to 1963, he was editor of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, the stunningly influential film journal whose writers included François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, and Rivette. These men would put down their pens and pick up cameras, ushering in a new era of formalism in film with the French New Wave. Rohmer would become one of its leading lights, but, though a decade older than most of his colleagues, he was the last to find fame. It was only when he was ousted from his editorship that he threw himself into the sort of artistry he'd been championing.

He was overthrown because the tide had turned. *Cahiers* had been founded in protest of a French film criticism that blindly celebrated the mediocre work coming out of France, while criticizing the revolutionary work coming out of America. "We should love America," Rohmer wrote, because Hollywood was turning an entertainment into an art form. They extolled Alfred Hitchcock and Howard Hawks, much to the consternation of the establishment. That adoration of America would eventually lead to the labeling of the group—and particularly Rohmer—as too conservative. (Years later, his 2001 film *The Lady and the Duke* would be controversial in France for showing the terror of the French Revolution.) But they weren't particularly political. The *Cahiers* crowd resolutely stood for art for art's sake over any ideological agendas.

They upset the elite because they were no elitists. As Emilie Bickerton notes in the recently released *A Short History of Cahiers du Cinéma*, the original French avant-garde wanted their work to be seen by as many people as possible. "In similar spirit," she writes, "*Cahiers* first championed the films it believed were the best of the art, with the aim to bring a deeper understanding of their value to the wider public, whom it believed perfectly capable of grasping them."

And film, Rohmer soon realized, could reach far more people than any other art form. It was also the one best suited to his high-minded mission. "Perhaps of all the

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arts, film is the only one today that knows how to walk without faltering on those high summits and with all the magnificence required, the only one that still leaves room for the aesthetic category of the sublime, elsewhere discarded because of an excusable sense of modesty," he wrote in a *Cahiers* essay collected in his book *The Taste for Beauty*. Filmmakers were the only artists who needed not fear mockery for exploring the divine. "Since Victor Hugo's voice was silenced, what writer would dare not banish the words *magnificent*, *terrifying*, or *grandiose* from his pen?"

Nowhere was his mastery of the moral more evident than in the early films that established his reputation: the "Six Moral Tales." This linked series of films, two shorts and four features, that he made between 1963 and 1972 all have the same plot: A man in love with one woman is tempted by another. It's a seemingly small idea, but one that Rohmer's genius turned in elegant variations.

From the first two black-and-white shorts of 1963—*The Bakery Girl of Monceau* and *Suzanne's Career*—Rohmer's distinctive tone was set. Style doesn't make way for substance; it complements it. That's why his movies aren't full of things. The focus, instead, is on his characters. His visual style bears the influence of Balzac, with a determined, even heightened, realism. He emphasizes the enclosed spaces of Paris apartments and cafés, and even his outdoor shots feel somehow claustrophobic—these men and women are forced to confront one another, and themselves. There are no melodramatic soundtracks that tell the audience what to feel. Rohmer's films are obsessed with morals but don't offer an easy moral.

It was the third film in the series that saw the most success in America. *My Night at Maud's* (1969) was nominated for the Academy Awards for best screenplay and best foreign film. It was a major accomplishment for a foreign, talky film in which the main characters, in between flirtations, debate Pascal's Wager. Jean-Louis Trintignant, the protagonist, has decided to marry the beautiful and devout Françoise, but his commitment to both her and his Catholic religion is tested when he spends a night with the charming divorcée of the title.

Rohmer's characters never seem ready to settle into domestic bliss—even if they recognize it as such. Jean-Louis isn't the only one in love not so much with a woman, as with a sense of possibility. "The prospect of happiness opening indefinitely before me sobers me. I find myself missing that time, not too long ago, when I could experience the pangs of anticipation," says Frédéric in *Chloe in the Afternoon* (1972). The feeling isn't limited to men. Haydée, the title character in *La collectionneuse* (1967), declares, "Unmitigated happiness bores me."

Rohmer's self-centered men are thus infuriatingly—but somewhat understandably—indecisive. Jean-Louis stays up all night wondering whether he'll betray Françoise with Maud, while Frédéric is unsure whether he'll cheat on his wife with the compelling Chloe until the last possible moment. The women are always impossibly beautiful, their sweet smiles sometimes innocent, sometimes enticing. That might be why Rohmer's men often fall in love simply by sight—and then spend the rest of the movie trying to decide what to do about it. Rohmer's films aren't action flicks, no. But they're not about people who just sit around and talk. "People who are always thinking don't exist. Look at Dalí's *Melted Watch*, for example," Daniel wryly says in *La collectionneuse*. Rohmer's films are intellectual dramas whose action takes place inside the men whose morals are conflicted, but must be resolved in a single decision.

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Rohmer left his mark not just on the people who watched his films, but on the people who were driven by their beauty to make films of their own. His influence can be seen in everything from Whit Stillman's talky pictures that stress exploring psychology over developing plot, to Quentin Tarantino's violent movies whose characters often have Rohmer-like philosophical conversations. Rohmer was our greatest filmmaker-moralist, but his banner is kept flying by serious filmmakers such as Woody Allen and Neil LaBute, who show the same concern for our moral lives.

Rohmer once wrote, "The cinema is a privileged art form because it most faithfully transcribes the beauty of the real world. Art can never improve on reality." That might be true. But in showing us how deadly important a seemingly small decision can be—a decision a character can take two hours of stylish film time to make—Rohmer might have improved our conception of the reality of moral choice. **NR**

FOOTNOTE

*He lied. [When he left and said he didn't love
you anymore, that he needed to find
some space to grow as a person, above
all, as an artist, a writer of some kind,
living his thirty-two more years, thinking,
every single day (every one),
about your face, your touch, and the foul, stinking
unredeemably stupid thing he'd done,
dying alone, aware that he'd become
a writer of no consequence, who'd been
a hack, and even worse, who'd never come
within a country mile of love again,
whose life was less than a silly anecdote:
an empty cipher and a two-word note.]

—WILLIAM BAER

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Film

Generation Gap

ROSS DOUTHAT

THE dilemmas of youth are universal. Consider Nicholas and Victoria, a pair of late-blossoming youngsters currently making their way toward adulthood at a multiplex near you. Respectively male and female, American and English, middle-class and filthy rich, they nonetheless face a nearly identical set of difficulties as they navigate the choppy seas of adolescence. Both have foolish mothers

Youth in Revolt*'s Nick (Michael Cera) and Sheeni (Portia Doubleday)*

DIMENSION FILMS

and malign, controlling stepfather-figures. Both are variously ignored, manipulated, and bullied by many of the other adults around them. Both are virgins with a strong romantic streak. And both are separated from the girl/guy of their dreams by distance, legal obligations, and even language barriers.

Well, fine, maybe their situations aren't quite identical. Nicholas is Nick Twisp, the lovesick hero of *Youth in Revolt*, which fancies itself the thinking teenager's sex comedy. It's *American Pie* rewritten for *Juno* fans and *Arrested Development* obsessives—complete with Michael Cera, star of both, as the deadpan, quietly desperate hero. His milieu is West Coast suburbia; his mother is a divorcée who takes up with truck drivers and police officers; and his lady love is Sheeni Saunders (Portia Doubleday), the precocious daughter of trailer-park evangelicals, who shares his interest in old movies, world travel, and grand romantic gestures.

Victoria, meanwhile, is Alexandrina Victoria Hanover, best remembered as a formidable widow presiding over the British Empire's peak, but portrayed by Emily Blunt in *The Young Victoria* as a glowing girl-queen with a lot to learn. Her milieu is the palaces of 1830s Europe; her menacing stepfather-figure is Sir John Conroy (Mark Strong), who hoped to become Britain's de facto regent by dominating Victoria through her mother; and her would-be lover is her cousin, His Serene Highness Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, who shares Victoria's interest in opera, horseback riding, and programs of social reform.

If this description makes *The Young Victoria* sound like the more snobbish of the two movies, do not be deceived. No double feature is more likely to instill a fondness for the aristocratic pomposities of the 19th century, and a weariness with the smug pretensions of the 21st.

As costume dramas go, *The Young Victoria* is somewhat plotless. It plays as a series of vivid vignettes from the Queen's early years, strung like Christmas lights along the thread of her long-distance romance with Prince Albert (Rupert Friend). The domineering Conroy is introduced as the villain, but he recedes after a few early, hammy scenes, leaving the stage to other would-be influencers: King William IV, Leopold of Belgium, and Lords Melbourne, Wellington, and Peel.

The dramatic tension, such as it is, resides in the competition between the smooth Melbourne (Paul Bettany) and the devoted Albert to become Victoria's most trusted confidant. Mainly, though, the movie is a generous portrait of a great era's birth, and an appreciation of the elite that would preside over it—their culture and their class, their mix of dignity and idealism, and the way their charming stuffiness could melt, when appropriate, into great passion. And the cast, unsurprisingly, is flawless: Blunt is a star in the making, and she's surrounded by the finest flower of British acting, from Bettany and Friend to Miranda Richardson and Jim Broadbent.

Youth in Revolt has a similarly impressive supporting cast—Jean Smart, Steve Buscemi, Justin Long, Ray Liotta, Fred Willard, and Zach Galifianakis all put in appearances—but no similar generosity of spirit. That's a shame, because generosity is arguably more important in a sex comedy than in a historical drama. If you're going to mock your characters and expose them to sundry humiliations, then it's important to extend them some compassion along the way.

Instead, *Youth in Revolt* offers a long sneer at grown-up cluelessness. The movie pretends to satirize Nick's teenage pretensions—his taste for Sinatra and the French New Wave, his claim to be a "voracious reader of classic prose"—but in reality it shares them. After their first summertime encounter, Nick and Sheeni are constantly being separated: because their families live two states apart; because Sheeni has been bundled off to the French-speaking boarding school; because Nick, who goes in for some juvenile delinquency in an effort to impress his paramour, is being hunted by Berkeley law enforcement. But they're united, throughout, by their shared contempt for their suburban prison, and for the jerks, fanatics, harpies, and fools—which is to say, every grown-up character—trying to keep them locked away in it.

This means that the movie's adult cast is largely wasted, since there are only so many ways to play a creep, a doofus, or a slattern. Worse, *Youth in Revolt* wastes what should be its most inspired conceit. In his quest to "go bad" and shed his Twispiness, Nick conjures up a darker alter ego: the chain-smoking François Dillinger (Cera, again, in tight-fitting slacks and a pencil-thin mustache), who breaks rules, talks dirty, and sets in motion a series of unfortunate events.

I'm not sure that Cera is up to playing a character who isn't fundamentally sweet-natured, but the movie barely lets him try. After an initial burst of activity, Dillinger is relegated to cameo appearances, marooning us once more with Nick, Sheeni, and the creeps.

Still, I suppose that's a happier fate than being essentially imprisoned in a gloomy palace by the sinister Lord Conroy, as the future Queen Victoria was throughout her childhood. And Victoria was stuck there for 18 years, whereas *Youth in Revolt*'s suffocating smugness lasts only 90 minutes—and you can always flee the theater early, if you like. **NR**

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Country Life

Upstate Blues

RICHARD BROOKHISER

CHRISTMAS has come and gone, even for the Eastern Orthodox, and the stores are looking ahead to Valentine's Day. But many upstate lawns still have their Christmas decorations: Santa, Frosty, inflated penguins (penguins were big this year, even though they don't live at the North Pole). They stand like unbudgeable guests who have stayed at a party after the host has unplugged the coffee urn and gone to bed. They are better-humored, for they are still waving merrily, but the feelings they induce are unsettling. They have lingered past their time, like ghosts. They represent the black backside of upstate: depression.

Depression manifests itself in lack of will. That is what the belated Santas show. People, in a burst of holiday cheer or a bout of family obligation, put them out. But those same people are unable or unwilling to take them down. Routine is supposed to be the great deadener of souls; how much worse is the half-completed task, the broken round, the unfulfilled routine?

As usual there is a diagnosis for it—seasonal affective disorder—and as usual it tells only part of the story. The cold keeps people inside and makes them stir-crazy, while the short days put them spiritually to sleep. Cold is no friend: It slips in, through door cracks and floorboards, and slaps your face as soon as you step outside. Bundling up to keep it off makes you heavy and stiff. Dusk at five o'clock is no pick-me-up either. Maybe bears have the right idea: grow a girdle of fat and go to sleep. But, although the cold stays until February, the light starts growing longer after the solstice, and becomes noticeably so by New Year's. Besides, winter can't explain why so many people upstate seem depressed all year long.

What are the signs of depression? How about piles of stuff in the yard? This is a tricky point. One of the benefits of owning an acre of land is that you have room to put stuff. Rural residential zoning allows you to put down anything, short of a junkyard, and rural gun ownership guarantees that it will stay put, though who would want a pile of field stone anyway? But sometimes the stack of two-by-fours, or the rusted-out burn barrel, or the boat under a tarp, or the truck with a mismatched hood and fender and a notional price chalked on its windshield (the price and the truck haven't changed in years), or all of these things together cross the line from husbandry to clutter. "If a man have not order within him, he cannot spread order about him," said Ezra Pound, who should have known about inner disorder. Some lawns have all the cheer of old cemeteries.

Another sign of depression is the unpainted outbuilding. Here again it is a matter of degree. The weathered barn slat can look like a wise face in an old photograph: Lincoln, Whitman. But when the slats begin to show gaps, trouble has begun. Once the horizontals and the verticals start to slip and sag, the end is near: Only an effort on the order of Robert Moses can save the outbuilding now. I remember a two-storey house on the grounds of a small, broken-down summer resort (but not dead—cars and laundry always decorate a handful of the cottages come July). Its collapse took about two weeks; my friend Doug, who has put up many buildings in his time, said, with grim relish, "It's moving!" A good wet snow brings the untended outbuilding down, like a bomb. The degrees of serious depression are measured by how long the pieces stay, uncleared.

A more brutal sign of depression is drink. Our drug habits fatten Mexican gang lords and al-Qaeda, but the most destructive drug in America is what it has always been, John Barleycorn. An Indian storeowner—all the gas stations and convenience stores upstate are owned by Indians—took the pulse of his neighbors and opened a warehouse behind his grocery store, entirely devoted to alcohol. It reflects market segmentation: One half is for beer, the other half is for wine and spirits. He is not going broke. As destructive as the booze are the lottery tickets, colored spools of them dangling at every cash register. A mathematician I know calls lotteries the stupidity tax. They strike me as the hope of the hopeless. I can see the rough justice in allowing American Indians to plunder us via casinos. But why do the state governments, which we elect, turn on the credulous who haven't managed to get to Foxwoods?

Work might be the cure, but where are people supposed to work upstate? The job market is grim. There are the irreducibles: government, including schools; stores; services; professions; restaurants and bars. Then there are the local businesses: resorts; a handful of farms; prisons. Then there are the alternative businesses, which barely make it: You can't throw a brick where I am without hitting a masseuse. This is the infrastructure of a ghost economy. Resorts and prisons are for outsiders. Schools educate the young (to do what?). Aside from the farms, what is the rest but taking in each other's washing? Xton, in one direction, used to have an IBM plant (we know what happened to that), and Yville, in the other direction, had a factory that made television antennas. Thanks to a broken oven safety valve, I am now using one of those old antennas as a lever to turn the propane line on and off. I borrowed it from Doug; it has not pulled in a show since Ed Sullivan went off the air, and the factory was sold and moved about then too. Given the tax structure of New York, a businessman who had any choice would be insane to set up here. Few do.

So, in one of earth's garden spots, Adam and Eve sit. The Santas will come down about March. **NR**

Routine is supposed to be the great deadener of souls; how much worse is the half-completed task, the broken round, the unfulfilled routine?

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Happy Warrior

BY MARK STEYN

Carried Away

"It's 'Elf 'n' Safety, mate, innit?" You only have to spend, oh, 20 minutes in almost any corner of the British Isles to have that distinctive local formulation proffered as the explanation for almost any feature of life. The signs at the White Cliffs of Dover warning you not to lean over the cliff? It's Health & Safety, mate. Primary schools that forbid their children to make daisy chains because they might pick up germs from the flowers? Health & Safety, mate. The decorative garden gnomes Sandwell Borough Council ordered the homeowner to remove from outside her front door on the grounds that she could trip over them when fleeing the house in event of its catching fire? Health & Safety. The fire extinguishers removed from a block of flats by Dorset risk assessors because they're a fire risk? Health & Safety. Apparently the presence of a fire extinguisher could encourage you to attempt to extinguish the fire instead of fleeing for your life.

In December a death in the family brought me face to face with Health & Safety. I don't mean the deceased expired because he tripped over a garden gnome or succumbed to a toxic daisy chain: He died of non–Health & Safety–related causes. A funeral just before Christmas is always a logistical nightmare, and I didn't really start grieving until the car pulled into the churchyard. It was a picture-perfect English country setting: The old part of the church dates from the 9th century, and the new part from the 10th century. I felt a mild pang of envy at such a bucolic resting place: mossy gravestones, the shade of a yew tree, cattle grazing across the church wall.

Danger!

Ahead of us, the pallbearers emerged from the hearse, very sober and reserved. And at that point they produced a contraption halfway between a supermarket cart and a gurney. "What's that?" asked someone. Funeral directors are immensely finicky, and, in the course of a thousand and one questions about the size of this, the color of that, nobody had said anything about a shopping cart.

"Oh, that's to roll the coffin in on," replied one of the pallbearers.

"Hang on," I said. "You're pallbearers. Aren't you going to carry the coffin?"

"Not allowed, mate. 'Elf 'n' Safety. The path's uneven." He motioned to the dirt track leading from the church gate to the door.

"The path's been uneven for a thousand years," I pointed out, "but it doesn't seem to have prevented them holding funerals."

"It's not me, it's 'Elf 'n' Safety," he said, sullenly. "They'd rather we wheeled it in in case one of us slipped. On the uneven path."

We conferred. The ladies were unhappy about the Wal-Mart cart. "Screw this," said my brother-in-law gallantly. "*We'll* carry it in." He motioned to me and a couple of other male relatives.

"You can't do that," protested the head pallbearer. "You're not licensed pallbearers."

"So what?" I said. "As you've just explained, a licensed pallbearer is explicitly licensed not to bear palls."

"You can't just pick up the coffin and take it in!" he huffed. It was now the undertakers' turn to confer. Inside the church, the organist was vamping the old Toccata & Fugue and wondering where everyone was. I had a vague feeling we were on the brink of the more raucous moments of the Ayatollah Khomeini's funeral, with rival mobs tugging his corpse back and forth.

The pallbearer returned. "We'll carry it," he informed us, "but you blokes have to help us. That way, if 'Elf 'n' Safety complain, we can say you made us do it, and they can take it up with you."

"I don't believe New Hampshire would extradite for that," I said confidently. And we made a rather moving and solemn sight as we proceeded stiffly down the dangerously uneven path that villagers had trod for over a millennium until we reached the even more dangerously uneven ancient, worn flagstones of the church itself.

As they say over there, it's Health & Safety gone mad, innit? Or as a lady put it after the funeral, as we were discussing the fracas, "There's only one thing that annoys me more than Health & Safety gone mad, and that's when people say, 'Ooh, it's Health & Safety gone mad.'" I know what she means. In Britain, the distillation of any daily grievance into a handy catchphrase seems to absolve one of the need to do anything about it. As long as they can grumble the agreed slogan, they'll put up with ever more absurd incursions on individual liberty. No state can insure its citizenry against all risks, although in Nanny Bloomberg's New York City and hyper-regulated California they're having a jolly good go. And that's the point: The goal may be unachievable, but huge amounts of freedom will be lost in the attempt. The right to evaluate risk for oneself is part of what it means to be a functioning human being.

Meanwhile, back at the headquarters of the Health & Safety Executive itself, it was reported in 2007 that staff are forbidden to move chairs lest they do themselves an injury. Instead, a porter has to be booked 48 hours in advance, which makes last-minute seating adjustments at staff meetings somewhat problematic. "Pull up a chair"? Don't even think about it.

It's good to know that at their own HQ the ever more coercive tinpot bureaucrats don't just talk the talk, they walk the walk. Even if they won't push the push. **NR**

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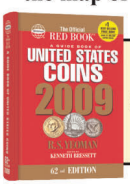

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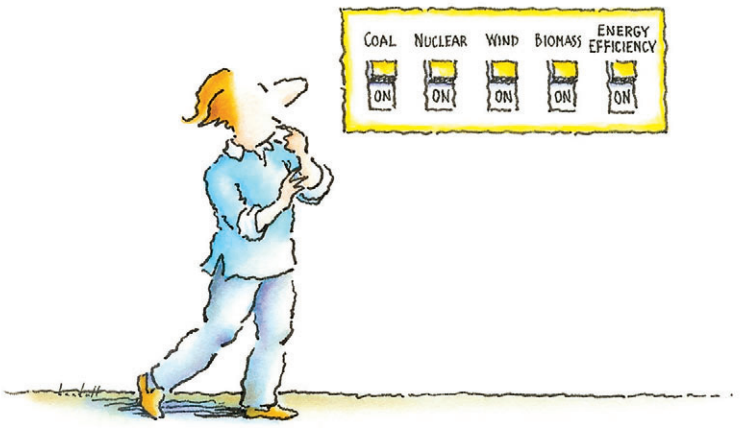

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